

THE

139. d: 26.
TWO FRIENDS;

OR,

THE LIVERPOOL MERCHANT.

A DRAMA,

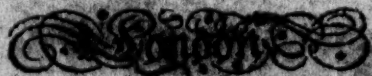
IN FIVE ACTS.

TRANSLATED BY C. H.—. FROM THE FRENCH
OF BEAUMARCHAIS.

K. Caron de Beaumarchais

Tecum vivere amem, tecum obeam libens.

Hon. Od. 9.



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1800.

THE

TWO FRIENDS

OF

THE LIVERPOOL MERCHANT

DRAMMA

IN FIVE ACTS

41.

TRANSLATED BY C. H. FROM THE FRENCH

OF THE

74.



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ADDRESS OF THE TRANSLATOR.

TO the public of this favoured kingdom, the translator submits his labours with confidence.

The subject he has chosen is founded on nature and probability; and is every way worthy the pen of a writer who has already gained no small degree of celebrity in a country where genius is sure to find encouragement and patronage.

It is no compliment to the British Nation to say its morality exceeds that of any other.—This is a truth felt and experienced; which induced the translator to the choice of the following Drama, which seems best to pourtray and enforce a due observance on those virtues which are, as if it were, the sinews of society.

To the contemplation of the British Merchant in particular, the following interesting fable is submitted, wherein is forcibly delineated the struggle and the triumph of native generosity and in-born worth; assured they will not fail to cherish, in an impressive fiction, those sentiments they so cordially take to their heart and bosom in real life.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

AURELLY, a rich Merchant of Liverpool ; a passionate, honest, plain and sincere man.

MELAC, SEN., Receiver-General of the Taxes in the County, living in Liverpool ; a philosopher of sensibility.

MELAC, JUN., brought up with Pauline ; a young man of a warm temper and exquisite sensibility.

SAINT-ALBAN, employed on a Circuit for the Exchequer ; a man of the world.

DABINS, Cashier to Mr. Aurelly, protected by Melac, Sen. ; a man of judgment, and much attached to his patron.

ANDRÉ, a Valet ; a simpleton ; a ridiculous French character.

PAULINE, Niece to Aurelly, brought up by Melac, Sen., whose accomplishments exceed her age.

The Scene is at Liverpool, in the Saloon of a House in the occupation of Mr. Aurelly and Mr. Melac.

THE
TWO FRIENDS.

A C T I.

PAULINE, MELAC, JUN.

The time, ten in the morning.—The stage represents a drawing-room; on one side of which, is a piano-forte open, with a stand loaded with music. PAULINE, in a morning dress, sitting at the piano-forte, plays a piece of music. MELAC stands by her in a light morning frock, his hair turned up with a comb, a violin in his hand, accompanies her.—The curtain draws up at the first measures of the andante.

While the actors are supposed to be playing music, the first violins of the orchestra play with sourdines (mutes) an andante, which the second and bass accompany by striking only the strings of the instruments, which completes the illusion of the small concert represented on the stage.

PAULINE (*when the piece of music is ended*).

HOW do you like this sonata?

Melac, Jun. Your lively execution enhances its merit.

B

Pau-

Pauline. 'Tis your opinion, not your praise, that I wish.

Melac, Jun. I must confess it would please me less under the fingers of another person.

Pauline (rises). Very well. But I am going; for I have not yet seen my uncle.

Melac, Jun. (stops her). He is gone—he is going....

Pauline. On 'Change, most likely?

Melac, Jun. I think he is. Payments begin to-morrow. That critical and dangerous time for merchants requires them to meet.

Pauline. He retired very late last night.

Melac, Jun. They had a long conference. My father was complaining to him of the bankers of the Exchequer, who refuse me the reversion of his place.

Pauline. Rudely, no doubt?

Melac, Jun. Under the pretence of having granted it. "That's your way," said your uncle; "you don't ask, then some one steps in and gains the reward of your long services."—But do you know, Pauline, I cannot but imagine that if any one in the company has done us an ill office, it must be Saint-Alban.

Pauline. Illiberal supposition! I have seen every thing he has written in your behalf.

Melac, Jun. We may show what we chuse.

Pauline. You delight in accusing him.

Melac, Jun. Not so much as you in defending him.

Pauline (angrily). I have no patience. Now he

is;

is gone,—must he be the constant theme of our discussion?

Melac, Jun. (with a knowing look). Well let us quit the subject. . . . They then spoke of your establishment—of mine . . . My father winked at me ;—I retired. But, as I was going, I heard him speak a word . . . Ah ! Pauline . . . (*attempts to take her band.*)

Pauline (recedes). Well, Sir ?

Melac, Jun. A certain word. . . .

Pauline (interrupts him). I have no curiosity. . . . Let us talk of the little entertainment we prepare for my uncle, on the occasion of his late promotion.—Have you thought of it ?

Melac, Jun. I have settled every thing.—We'll begin with a concert.—Our party shall be small : we and our masters. Near its conclusion, he'll be sent for ; a carpet and two screens, placed during his absence, will do the business ; then we'll present him with the prettiest little play

Pauline. Oh, no play.

Melac, Jun. Why not ?

Pauline. You know the weakness of my voice.

Melac, Jun. Comedy, to be acted with propriety, requires no farther exertion than level speaking ;—that charming countenance !—affecting and expressive, —the very index of each emotion of the mind. In what can you be deficient ? A young actress is always sufficiently heard when she has talent enough to be listened to.

Pauline. Oh ! as to you, you'll not be charged with being deficient in point of eloquence, nor

want of ingenuity to convert others to your opinions.
—But what of the stanzas I asked you for?

Melac, Jun. (with tenderness). You're afraid I should forget them? Unjust Pauline! . . .

Pauline (interrupts him, placing herself at the instrument). Let us try another piece of music before I dress.

Melac, Jun. (tuning his violin). With all my heart.

Pauline. Give me the new book.

Melac, Jun. (angrily). Why not go on with the same?

Pauline. To go a little from the old road.—However, as it was for you only. . . .

Melac, Jun. (with an incredulous look). Yes! For me!

Pauline (laughing). Thus it is with ungrateful man! Seeking for ever to lessen obligations, that he may not himself be bound by gratitude!—Don't you find more spirit and variety in this music?

Melac, Jun. (dissatisfied). More spirit, more variety! Delicious!—'Tis the handsome Saint-Alban who chose it for you in London.

Pauline. Then Saint-Alban for ever! You're a strange man! You wou'd be supremely happy not to see me beloved by any one!

Melac, Jun. Am I then never to be happy?

Pauline. You would that no one could bear me.

Melac, Jun. No; but 'tis natural enough I shou'dn't like a man who affects tenderness for you.

Paul-

Pauline. To be revenged of his mood you shall accompany his favorite.

Melac, Jun. Oh, not I. (*Places the violin on a chair.*)

Pauline. Do you refuse me ?

Melac, Jun. I rather beg pardon for all I have said. (*He kneels.*)

Pauline. Then I insist upon it.

Melac, Jun. Tyranny.

Pauline (jesting). Obey ; else I never will call you any more brother.

Melac, Jun. (with an hypocritical look, rising). Should the name displease you, you have a way to make me renounce it.

Pauline. And that's ? . . .

Melac, Jun. To allow me a sweeter one.

(*MELAC, Sen. appears in the back of the stage.*)

Pauline. I don't understand you.

Melac, Jun. You don't understand me ? I am going . . .

Pauline (cutting him short). " I am going ! " . . . I am going to play the piece of music.—Will you accompany me or no ?

Melac, Jun. (kissing her hands). Pardon, pardon ; as to this, 'tis too difficult, indeed.

Pauline (with an arch look). Hum . . . You, mischievous temper ! I know the reason that makes you think so.—(*He kisses her hands ; she gets angry.*) Have done, Mr. Melac, I told you already such freedom offends me. Let my hands go.

Melac,

Melac, Jun. Who could refuse (*he continues kissing her hands*) a just homage . . . to their dexterity?

(*MELAC, Sen. retires mysteriously*).

Pauline (flying away). Again? Stubborn! Refractory! Quarrelsome! Daring! Jealous! . . . For you deserve all these names.—You refuse to accompany me;—this evening you shall be publicly put to the blush for it. [*Exit.*]

Melac, Jun. (solus). My heart follows her . . . Ah! Pauline . . . I am jesting with her . . . wrangling with her . . . stubborn with her . . . Was it not for that subterfuge, I never could dare . . . If my father had obtained that reversion for me, my situation would have then been settled at once . . . “I insist upon it,” says she.—“Obey.” . . . I like to see her make thus a property of me, unknown to herself. (*He goes and shuts the piano-forte.*) Yes; but let her say what she pleases, I will not play Mr. Saint-Alban’s music. . . How I do hate him, with his wit, his great fortune and affected manners! He had much occasion to remain here three whole weeks, that fine gentleman! . . . He is sent on a circuit . . .

Enter MELAC, Sen.

Melac, Sen. (affecting to be surprised). What! alone, Sir! I thought I heard some music.

Melac, Jun. ’Twas Pauline, father; she is just gone to dress.

Melac, Sen. But you don’t appear decent, Melac; your hair . . .

Melac, Jun. She was in dishabille herself.

Melac,

Melac, Sen. The lovely confidence of innocence does not authorize your being rude.

Melac, Jun. Me! rude to her, father!

Melac, Sen. Yes, Sir; 'tis rude to appear before her in this disorder . . . Unaware of the danger, her esteem for you precludes all fears. Is that a reason to forget what you owe to her sex, to her age and her situation?

Melac, Jun. I don't visit her in this dress. This apartment is common to us both; we have always study'd here in the morning . . . When people live together . . . But till now, father, you had not observed it . . . Did Mr. Aurelly make this remark?

Melac, Sen. Her uncle? No, my friend. As plain as he is honest, he never surmises evil; but, thoroughly engaged with his business, he entrusted me with the morals and education of his niece; and I am bound to protect her by my cares . . .

Melac, Jun. Protect her!

Melac, Sen. She is no longer a child, Sir; and these familiarities of former times . . .

Melac, Jun. (*rather out of countenance*). I trust I never shall forget myself in her presence, and hope always to shew as much respect as I feel attachment for her.

Melac, Sen. Why should you secrete that attachment, if founded on reason only? To be cheerful and unrestrained with her in society, in my presence, in her uncle's presence, is right;—but 'tis when you find her alone, that you must be respectful. The first penalty inflicted on him who is wanting in decency is to lose all taste for it. One fault begets another:

another : they accumulate, the heart becomes depraved. One begins by being weak, and ends in being vicious.

Melac, Jun. (out of countenance). Father, have I then merited such severe reproof ?

Melac, Sen. (in a milder tone). Advice is far distant from reproof. Thus far, my dear son, never forget that the niece of your friend, of your father's benefactor, is to be held sacred by you. Remember that she has no mother to watch for her safety. Be sensible that my honor and yours must be here the protectors of her innocence and reputation.—Go and get dressed. *[Exit Melac, Jun.]*

Melac, Sen. (solus). If he had an idea that I saw him, he would have used in exculpating himself all the attention he has bestowed on my moral. One can't belie oneself; and if he is in the wrong, he can without me apply the lesson to himself. This brings to my recollection with what care Aurelly turned the conversation last night when I introduced the establishment of his niece.—His niece! . . . But is she really so? . . . His embarrassment, while speaking to me, appeared bordering on . . . on confusion. . . My suspicions are leading me astray . . . Whatever may be the case, I never will suffer my friend to have cause for upbraiding me with having shut my eyes on their conduct.

Enter ANDRÉ, his hair in paper, and in a morning-jacket, a hand-broom under his arm,—looks about, then retires.

André. He is not at home, Mr. Dabins.

Melac,

Melac, Sen. What now?

André. Ah! noting—noting at all.—'Tis dat great gentelmane.

Melac, Sen. What gentleman?

André. Dat gentelmane vitch is comine,—vitch made me laugh so much dee day of dat story.

Melac, Sen. Has he got no name?

André. Oh! yes to be sure he has a name.—Monseer, Monseer;—to be sure he calls himself someting besides.

Melac, Sen. What then besides?

André. Me believe I heard dee right nom:—Londres, two and a half; Hambourgh, Canada, thirty-eight.—Vat do I know?

Melac, Sen. (*laughing out of pity*). Ah! the stock-broker?

André. Ah! c'est ça.

Melac, Sen. But 'tis not me he is looking for.

André. Dis Monseer Dabins.

Melac, Sen. Let him call at Aurelly's banking-house.

André. He has just been dere, and dee cashier be gone already?

Melac, Sen. Such a day as this! He must be mad then!

André. Me can't tell dat.

Melac, Sen. Go and see in his room, in the garden, every where.

André (*goes and comes again*). But I have my own businai . . . Den, if I don't find him, vat me tell him?

Melac, Sen. Nothing; else there would be no end . . . *[Exit André.]*

Melac, Sen. (solus). Who would think that such a simpleton could suit a man so hot-headed as Aurelly!—His rule is right enough, however;—for people of that profession, less wit—less corruption.

Enter DABINS.

Melac, Sen. You're wanted, Mr. Dabins.

Dabins. Sir, I have been this hour seeking for an opportunity to meet you here alone.

Melac, Sen. What do you want with me?

Dabins. Can I speak freely?

Melac, Sen. Explain.

Dabins. How shall I acquaint you with the misfortune? . . .

Melac, Sen. Make your mind easy.—Speak.

Dabins. This letter I have this moment received. . .

Melac, Sen. What omen does it portend?

Dabins. Have you an affection for Mr. Aurelly?

Melac, Sen. Have I an affection for Mr. Aurelly! —You frighten me.

Dabins. Unless a miracle takes place, he must stop payment to-morrow.—He must . . .

Melac, Sen. Wretched man!—should any one hear! . . . You must be out of your senses . . . Where did you learn? . . . It cannot be.

Dabins. I foresaw your surprise and your concern; the fact, however, is but too notorious.

Melac, Sen. Notorious! you say?—*(Aside.)* I dare not question him . . . Mr. Dabins, are you aware of the importance?—*(Aside.)* He has troubled me.

Dabins.

Dabins. Mr. Aurelly had in London upwards of forty thousand pounds bank paper.

Melac, Sen. At his friend's, Mr. Prefort—I know.

Dabins. He desired me some time back to write to that correspondent to sell out, and send me the amount in remittances.

Melac, Sen. Proceed.

Dabins. Instead of the money I expected, his son dispatched me a messenger which arrived twelve hours before the post.

Melac, Sen. Well, what of that messenger?

Dabins. He informs me that the very moment our paper was to be discounted, Mr. Prefort fell suddenly ill, and expired in two days, and that the seals were instantly put on his papers.

Melac, Sen. Why all this uneasiness?—I regret Prefort; but he leaves an immense fortune.—Aurelly will claim his property, and it shall be returned. This can be but a delay at most.—Go on.

Dabins. I have done. Our payment was founded on those returns which never failed. We have not five hundred pounds left in bank.

Melac, Sen. And to-morrow! . . . you have to pay . . . ?

Dabins. Five-and-twenty thousand;—'tis enough to drive one mad.

Melac, Sen. He leaves me.—He is not then acquainted . . . ?

Dabins. That's all my concern. You know his probity, his principles . . . this will cause his death. . . . Such a good, such a beneficent man! . . . However, Sir, no one but you can take the charge to inform him

Melac, Sen. 'Tis not possible that Aurelly has not with him a sufficient sum to prevent this accident.

Dabins. He has an extensive property . . . This house, his estates ;—but twenty-five thousand pounds to be paid to-morrow,—and not one shilling

Melac, Sen. Stop.—I know he has twelve thousand pounds that he told me a friend had entrusted him with.

Dabins. Those thousands are no longer in his possession ; Mr. Prefort took upon himself to exchange them for paper. Every thing is there at this moment ;—every thing's missing at once.

Melac, Sen. Fifty thousand pounds stopped at the very moment of paying !

Dabins. He will starve in the midst of plenty.

Melac, Sen. (*walking about*). You have said the word ;—this will prove his death.—The most virtuous, the most prudent of men ! . . . A name so immaculate ! . . . Should he stop payment, his honor must . . . The unfortunate man ! he can't outlive it ; that's certain. (*He walks faster.*)

Dabins. If this news had been received a week sooner

Melac, Sen. He is a lost man !

Dabins. This last promotion, besides, has excited so much jealousy ! You'll be able to judge, Sir, how many friends his misfortunes will spare him. There is not, perhaps, one single merchant in town who would not rejoice in the bottom of his heart . . . To find money, there's no hope for it.

Melac,

Melac, Sen. (walks). I have here between four and five thousand pounds of my own.

Dabins. What's that ?

Melac, Sen. (thoughtful). Why, true ;—in fact, what is it ?

Dabins. Hardly the sixth part of what is wanted.

Melac, Sen. (stands still). Mr Dabins.

Dabins. Sir.

Melac, Sen. Where is your messenger ?

Dabins. I ordered him to keep out of sight.

Melac, Sen. Mr. Dabins, go and wait for me in my closet. Let no one see you. Shut yourself up ; shut yourself up carefully.—I'll be with you presently. I must collect myself . . .

Dabins. On the best method of informing him ? . . .

Melac, Sen. 'Tis he.—Be gone, and not a word.

Enter AURELLY.

Aurelly. Good morning, Melac.—Ah ! you are here, Dabins ?—I met the broker who is looking for you ; he takes with him my two bills on Petersburg. Well ; our affairs in London ? . . . But how you colour, Melac !

Melac, Sen. 'Tis nothing.

Aurelly (to Dabins, who is going). Mr. Dabins, let me have to-night the amount of all my payments.

[Exit Dabins.]

Aurelly (merrily). I was just wishing for you. You would have then witnessed such a scuffle . . .

Melac, Sen. With whom ?

Aurelly. That new created nobleman, so infatuated with his dignity, so big with his money, and

so swelled with pride, that he thinks himself degraded by bowing to a citizen.

Melac, Sen. (distracted). The less distance there is between men, the more punctilious they are to make it remarkable.

Aurelly. He who, until this epoch of my elevation, never deigned me a look, takes upon himself to-day to compliment me in the stile of a superior.—“ I flatter myself,” said he, “ that you will at last give up business.”

Melac, Sen. (aside). Ah ! Heaven !

Aurelly. What ?

Melac, Sen. (forcing a laugh). Methinks I hear him.

Aurelly. On the contrary, Sir, I replied ; I consider this circumstance only as an additional inducement to transact business with credit.

Melac, Sen. (embarrassed). Ah, my friend, trade exposes one to such dreadful changes !

Aurelly. You bring it to my recollection : the broker don't explain himself ; and, by his looks, I would venture to say that the time of payment will not pass without some considerable bankruptcy.

Melac, Sen. That critical time never approaches without making my heart ache for the fate of those to whom it may prove fatal.

Aurelly. For my part, I insist that pity for thieves is but a wretched weakness, a theft committed on honest people.—Is then the generation of good men extinct ?

Melac, Sen. I am not speaking of thieves.

Aurelly (warmly). Dishonest people, when known,
are

are less dangerous than these: one is guarded against them. Their name at least secures one against their knavery.

Melac, Sen. Very well. But . . .

Aurelly. But a bad man who for twenty years laboured to be thought an honest man, strikes a deadly blow to confidence, when his phantom of honor disappears; the example of his deceitful probity prevents the real honest dealer from being trusted.

Melac, Sen. (with concern). Is there then no such thing, dear Aurelly, as an excusable failure? The death of a single individual, a fault of payment in another, a fraudulent bankruptcy to a certain amount, are sufficient of themselves to cause a number of unfortunate failures.

Aurelly. Unfortunate or not, the security of trade cannot admit those artful distinctions; and failures free from knavery, are but seldom free from imprudence.

Melac, Sen. But you run into extremes by confounding thus . . .

Aurelly. I wish there were for the purpose laws so severe as to compel at last all men to be just.

Melac, Sen. Eh! my friend, laws curb the wicked without making them better; and the purest morals cannot secure an honest man from unforeseen misfortunes.

Aurelly. Sir, the probity of a merchant is too important to the community, for him to expect mercy in such a case.

Melac, Sen. (getting warm). You condemn indiscriminately the unfortunate and the guilty.

Aurelly. I know no difference.

Melac,

Melac, Sen. What! if one of your friends, the victim of events . . . ?

Aurelly. I should be his severest judge.

Melac, Sen. (looking on him steadfastly). If it was me ?

Aurelly. If it was you ?—(*Aside.*) His looks make me tremble.

Melac, Sen. You don't answer.

Aurelly (haughtily). If it was you? . . . (*With fervency.*) But in the first instance you are not a merchant : and that's always your way ; when you cannot convince my judgment, you besiege my heart.

Melac, Sen. (aside). Oh, Heaven ! how shall I inform him ? . . .

Enter PAULINE, in full dress.

Pauline. Ah ! there's my uncle returned.

Melac, Sen. (aside, with concern). And his niece !

Pauline. How do you do, my dear uncle ? Did you rest better last night than the preceding one ?

Aurelly. I did.—And you ?

Pauline. Your serious conversation at supper agitated me a little ;—it left an impression. . . I cou'd'nt sleep much.

Aurelly (laughing). We'll be careful in future to chuse more lively subjects. We must not disturb her nights who makes our days pass so agreeably. (*Pauline embraces him.*)

Melac, Sen. (aside). His security pierces me to the very soul.

Aurelly. Pray, child, what amusement have you laid out for the day ?

Pau-

Pauline. In the evening?—A challenge of music between the obstinate Melac and me; you'll be umpires. You know he prefers the violin to all other instruments.

Aurelly (merrily). And you're a champion for the harpsichord?

Pauline. I support the honor of the harpsichord.—'Tis agreed between the combatants that whichever is defeated shall accompany the other, who will shine alone the remaining part of the concert; and I can tell you I have means to make him die out of spite.

Aurelly. Bravo! bravo!

Melac, Sen. (with concern). Wou'd'nt it be better, my friends, to postpone this concert? So many people in town are for the moment sinking under troubles and uneasiness. They will say: "It seems that these people are making a show of their opulence to insult the difficulties of others."—They'll compare that unseasonable joy with the despair which stabs, perhaps, at this very moment, worthy people who are obliged to keep silent.

Aurelly (laughing). Ha! ha! ha! Do you see how this grave philosopher, by a single word, disconcerts all our projects?—We must give it up to keep peace.—Put off your contest to some other day.

Melac, Sen. (aside, going). I must go and save, if possible, the honor and life of this unfortunate man.

{ *Exit.*

Aurelly. But There's something to-day Didn't you observe . . . ?

D

Pau-

Pauline. Indeed, he appeared to me wrapped in a cloud.

Aurelly. Ah ! philosophy likewise has its whims.

Pauline. What were you speaking of then ?

Aurelly. We were speaking of failures, bankruptcies.

Pauline. That's it.—He has such sensibility that he is afflicted by the misfortunes of those even he knows not.

Enter ANDRÉ, hollowing out and running.

André. Sire ! Sire !

Pauline (surprised). Ah ! . . .

Aurelly. What's all this ?

André (joyfully). Dee valet de chambre of Monseer Saint-Alban come down de cheval in dee yard.

Aurelly (in anger). Well ; can't you say so without running and bawling in one's ears ?

Pauline. He frightened me to such a degree.

André. Parbleu !—Is it noting den ? . . . Monseer de grand financier which arrive !

Aurelly. Saint-Alban ?

André. Monseer La Fleur left him à dee dernière poste.

Pauline (with anger). Suppose we had been informed of it two minutes later ?

Aurelly (to Pauline). What a pity the concert is put off !—You wanted umpires ; this is one you would not have objected to . . . He'll soon return . . . His messenger must have some refreshment.

André. Bon ! By gar he made but one step into dee larder.—Dat not proud.

Aurelly.

Aurelly. Follow me.

André. Vat chambre shall I prepare ?

Aurelly. Once more, follow me and I'll give orders. [Exeunt.

Pauline (solus,—thoughtful). Saint-Alban ! . . . 'Tis his pride that brings him back. . . . My heart's oppressed. (*She sighs*) . . . His persecution, the jealousy it causes to Melac, and, above all, the necessity of concealing under a chearful appearance a sentiment over which I have no command.—My situation indeed becomes more painful every day. [Exit.

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

A C T II.

MELAC, JUN, *in full dress*, PAULINE.

PAULINE (*with an affected gayety*).

FOR a gentleman so handsomely dressed, you're in a dreadful temper.

Melac, Jun. 'Tis your gayety, Miss Pauline, that's the cause of it; 'tis that sudden return.—Saint-Alban was to stay three months on his circuit. He remains one month here; and is hardly gone, but he's here again.

Pauline. If he has business in London.

Melac, Jun. La Fleur says he is not going to London. Such celerity has no object but you, Ma'am.

Pauline (laughing). How long have I been Ma'am with you?—The sweet names of brother and sister . . .

Melac, Jun. (with warmth). Saint-Alban loves you;—he is rich, has an eminent situation, and is esteemed.—I foresee all my misfortunes.—He loves you—he'll obtain you; then my sorrows will end my existence.

Pauline (lively). Tell me, pray, where you collect all the nonsense that escapes from you?

Melac, Jun. Hear me, Pauline.—You make profession of sincerity; assure me he has told you nothing: then I'll be calm.

Pau-

Pauline. What should he tell me ?

Melac, Jun. That you're handsome.—That . . .
That he loves you.

Pauline. That phrase is so common ; you told me so yourself. Don't you know that all the young men admitted into this house assume the same language ?

Melac, Jun. No one among them, undoubtedly, cou'd see you with indifference ;—but if they knew as well as I do . . .

Pauline. They would think me very hateful.

Melac, Jun. They wou'dn't need to find you so handsome, to love you to distraction.—But let us return . . .

Pauline. With a man like Saint-Alban, this language you are afraid of is nothing more than fashionable gallantry, and of no consequence ;—with others, 'tis mere giddiness ;—with you . . .

Melac, Jun. With me ?

Pauline (lively). With you ? . . . But I should like to know how you dare presume to interrogate me ?—You must be greatly privileged to make so free.

Melac, Jun. Ah ! Pauline !—He arrives, and you jest !

Pauline (gravely). No more, I desire.—Had any body else cause to praise me, then you would, perhaps, have reason to complain.

Melac, Jun. (warmly). That Saint-Alban makes me tremble ;—dispel my uneasiness.

Pauline. How troublesome you are !

Melac, Jun. Tell me only not to be uneasy.

Pauline. Oh ! when he has resolved on a thing !
(*Giddily*). If I tell you, will you then obey me ?

Melac,

Melac, Jun. (kissing her hands with rapture). My dear Pauline !

Pauline (running away). The same for ever !—One can't say a word, without being under the necessity of quarreling or running away. [*Exit.*

Melac, Jun. (solus—with joy). “ Will you then “ obey me ? ”—Has she bestowed on these few words all the sense I perceive in them ?—“ Will you then “ obey me ? ” . . . But why should I be thus disappointed by Saint-Alban's return ?

Enter MELAC, SEN. dressed for a journey,—full of thoughts,—a pencil and some paper in his hands.

Melac, Jun. (surprised). Oh ! you've changed your dress, father ?

Melac, Sen. (without looking,—in a melancholy tone). Inquire if the post-chaise is ready.

Melac, Jun. Are you going, father ?

Melac, Sen. (same tone). Yes.

Melac, Jun. Won't you have your coach ?

Melac, Sen. No.

Melac, Jun. You are not then going to . . . ?

Melac, Sen. I am going to London.

Melac, Jun. (uneasy). Such a sudden journey . . .

Melac, Sen. I shall soon return.

Melac, Jun. Does it not portend some accident ?

Melac, Sen. Mere business of the firm.

Melac, Jun. Oh ! . . . But do you know who's expected here to-day ?

Melac, Sen. Let him be who he will, I wish to be informed when the chaise is ready.

Melac, Jun. That could alter . . .

Melac,

Melac, Sen. Nothing—nothing could . . . What's o'clock ?

Melac, Jun. 'Tis not twelve.

Melac, Sen. Before two I shall be on the road.

Melac, Jun. Have you no orders for me, father ?

Melac, Sen. Leave me one single moment to myself ; I can't listen to you for the present.

Melac, Jun. (going out). Post . . . to London . . . So abruptly ! . . . Such frozen looks ! . . . I cannot conceive . . . I . . . (*Withdraws slowly, with looks intent on his father.*)

Melac, Sen. (walking about, solus). Between a criminal deed and an act of virtue, there's no hesitating. . . . But to be under the necessity of chusing between duties which both perplex and exclude each other. . . . If I suffer my friend to perish, when I have the power to save him, my ingratitude . . . His misfortune . . . Self-reproaches . . . His affliction . . . My own sorrow . . . All these I feel . . . My heart is rent. —Should I dispose for him of sums I am entrusted with . . . After all they are in no danger. (*He sighs.*) Scruples ! Prudence ! I hear you. You keep me from the unfortunate who suffers ; but compassion that brings me back to him is so powerful . . . Could I wish to be more happy, on condition of becoming hard, inhuman, ungrateful . . . 'Tis all over ;—when reason is insufficient, sentiment must triumph. If I am led astray, at least I shall be the only one to be pity'd ;—then my friend being saved, my wretchedness will not leave me destitute of consolation.

Enter

Enter DABINS, with a large parcel of bills of exchange in one hand, a paper in the other.

Melac, Sen. Are the sums right, Mr. Dabins?—The confusion wherein we are, mistakes are easily made.—Let us call over the sums before we part. Seven thousand five hundred guineas that you took away yourself through the garden.

Dabins. Sir, you'll find the sum total on the receipt. *(He gives it to him.)*

Melac, Sen. (reads). "I do hereby, as cashier for
" Mr. Aurelly, acknowledge having received from
" Mr. Melac the sum of twenty-five thousand
" pounds, for the use of the said Mr. Aurelly." . . .
That's right.—Get your payments ready without noise, as if your bills had been discounted in London.—As for me, I am waiting for the post-chaise to set off.

Dabins. Then you insist that he shall not know. . .

Melac, Sen. Whatever may be his danger, I know him;—for fear of hurting me, he would refuse every thing.

Dabins. Thus you acquit him of gratitude.

Melac, Sen. To require gratitude is to sell one's services; but this is not the case. Aurelly has often given me the example of what I am now doing for him.

Dabins. Oh! Sir; your virtue exaggerates itself.

Melac, Sen. No, dear Dabins.—For these thirty years I have been indebted to him for my situation and welfare; this is the only opportunity I ever had to make a return.—I was then retiring from the
army,

army, where I had soon consumed the scanty patrimony of a younger brother. At my return home, wounded, disbanded, ruined,—without property or resource,—by chance I met here with Aurelly, my worthy friend from infancy.—With what tenderness did he offer me an asylum!—He solicited for me, and obtained, without my knowledge, the situation I now hold.—He did more; he overcame my reluctance for an employment so different from my former.—“Accept, accept,” said he; “and if you are afraid that the situation is not honorable enough for you, it will become you to honor the situation.—The more it is open to fraud, the more nice should be the choice of those who are to fill it; and who knows in such a situation as this what good a virtuous man can do? what evil he can prevent?”—He thus won me with his zealous eloquence, he taught me to work, he tutored me as a father; oh, Aurelly!

Dabins. You have done away every objection.

Melac, Sen. Not a word more.—The five thousand pounds you hold in bills of exchange are my own. Can I dispose of it to a better advantage, and more to the gratification of my heart?—As to the rest, Saint-Alban is on his circuit for three months. . . . Aurelly will have sufficient time for . . .

Dabins. But every moment you may receive orders . . .

Melac, Sen. I told you I am going to London where I may soon recover Aurelly's property.—If called upon, I'll convert it into cash. This is but a good office, as you can perceive.

E

Dabins.

Dabins. Sir, I admire you!

Melac, Sen. Begone, my friend, least he should again meet us here together. [*Exit Dabins.*]

Melac, Sen. (solus,—sits down). Now I may breathe a moment . . . That news had nearly suffocated me . . . He laughed, the unfortunate man, when he looked at his niece . . . Every jest he offered made my blood run cold.—(*He rises.*) When I reflect that it was possible I might have been called upon for that money . . . Instead of relieving him I should have been compelled to inform him! . . . Oh! God! . . .

Re-enter DABINS, overpowered with fear.

Dabins. Mr. Saint-Alban . . .

Melac, Sen. Well!

Dabins. He arrives.

Melac, Sen. Saint-Alban?

Dabins. They are now showing him in.—I have returned to save you the first surprise. (*He runs away.*)

Melac, Sen. (solus). Saint-Alban! . . . Why am I not gone? . . . If he should speak of money!—Put the thing to the worst, I would then tell him . . . I could tell him that the renters have not yet . . . A lie! . . . Better, a thousand times, to . . . But I alarm myself; and, perhaps, he is only passing this way.

Enter

Enter AURELLY, SAINT-ALBAN, and
MELAC, JUN.

Saint-Alban. Pardon me, gentlemen, on account of my eagerness, for the incivility of appearing in my travelling dress.

Melac, Jun. (aside, with ill temper). His eagerness!—But he don't mention the object of his eagerness.

Saint-Alban. Are you going a journey?

Melac, Sen. With much regret, Sir, since you arrive.

Aurelly. This excursion is rather abrupt.

Melac, Sen. It is necessary.

Aurelly. If, as your son says, concerns of the firm call you away . . .

Melac, Sen. (embarrassed). Of the firm . . . Relating to the firm . . . Can I see without concern the reversion of my place pass to a stranger?

Aurelly (laughing). Ho! ho! ho! ho!

Saint-Alban. I am much gratified for having arrived in time to prevent you . . .

Aurelly. Do you think I would have suffered him to go?—(To *Melac, Jun.*) You may send the post-chaise back.

Melac, Sen. For what reason?

Saint-Alban. Because the place you are going to sue for, is already granted to your son.

Melac, Jun. (surprised). My father's place?

Aurelly (mimicking him). Yes, indeed! My father's place.

Melac, Jun. (aside). Ah! Pauline!

Saint-Alban (delivers a paper to Melac, Sen.) This will convince you.—However, I might wish to serve you on this occasion, I cannot dissemble that you are solely indebted to Mr. Aurelly's solicitations for it.

Melac, Sen. Sir, his generous character never relents.—It was reported, however, that the favour had been obtained by another.

Aurelly (merrily). 'Twas me.

Melac, Sen. That solicitor whose credit . . .

Aurelly. 'Twas me.

Melac, Jun. The person who was before hand . . .

Aurelly. Was me.—Long since I made it my business.—Has he not brought up a charming niece for me ?

Melac, Jun. (briskly). Ah ! charming, indeed ! (*Melac, Jun. unable, yet endeavouring to hide his rapture. —Saint-Alban stares at him with curiosity.*)

Aurelly (taking Melac, Sen. by the hand). Hasn't he promised me to extend his cares even to my son, when he is old enough to be benefited by them ?—Mus'n't I then establish his own. Ah ! ah ! ah !

Melac, Sen. (aside). What a friend I am serving !

Melac, Jun. (aside). My joy has no bounds ; I must run and tell the news to Pauline. [*Exit, running.*]

Melac, Sen. Ah, the giddy head ! He forgets to return you thanks.

Aurelly. Don't you send the horses back ?

Melac, Sen. My journey is unavoidable.

Aurelly. What, still ?

Melac, Sen. (aside). What shall I do now to be off ?

Aurelly.

Aurelly (to Saint-Alban). However, let us throw aside this trifling conversation, and ask you, Sir, the cause of your quick return to us?

Saint-Alban. The same object, most likely, which takes Mr. Melac away.—I am recalled by the company; and desired . . . You'll allow me to speak of business before you?

Aurelly. Don't mind me. Else . . .

Saint-Alban. There's no mystery.—The object of my mission is to collect the money of this county, scattered in the various hands of our agents, and send it immediately to London.

Melac, Sen. (aside). What do I hear?

Aurelly. This is not the business of a moment.

Saint-Alban. I thought the operation more difficult at first; but I learn't in my journey that I had thanks to return to Mr. Melac for his exactitude. He spared me the best part of the work.

Melac, Sen. (disconcerted). Sir . . .

Aurelly. Ah! you may flatter yourselves, gentlemen, that few of your agents are so faithful.—He is punctual and always ready.—He is none of those who make use of your money.

Saint-Alban. Our esteem for Mr. Melac is too great to praise him for a fact so evident.—Let us then forward immediately that money so much desired. Then, free from all cares, I shall be able to enjoy the pleasure of remaining a few days to philosophise with you. (*Melac, Sen. appears overwhelmed with thought.*)

Saint-Alban (again, to Aurelly). But, Sir, you don't speak to me of your niece, the most amiable . . .

Aurelly.

Aurelly. Sir, a great misfortune has happened to her.

Saint-Alban. A misfortune?

Aurelly. Yes, Sir; she had disposed for this evening's entertainment the most charming and brilliant concert . . .

Saint-Alban. Who can have disconcerted this delightful plan?

Aurelly. Is that to be asked?—Our philosopher to be sure. He remonstrated to us that in these critical times, thousands of honest people, perhaps, were brought to despair, on account of their payments; and that the appearance of an entertainment . . . But observe his confused looks, the moment he hears of it.

Melac, Sen. (collecting himself). I . . . I was thinking of the various sums which have been remitted to me.

Saint-Alban. I have the account with me . . . Upwards of twenty thousand pounds . . . Shall we step into your closet?

Melac, Sen. (embarrassed). You had better rest yourself a few days.

Aurelly. But you are going to set off.

Melac, Sen. (more confused still). I would defer . . .

Saint-Alban. Ah! good God!—To rest myself!—I have not stopped these five nights; and 'twas not till after I was convinced that all the money belonging to the county was deposited in your hands, that I resolved on returning.

Melac, Sen. (aside). All's lost!

Saint-

Saint-Alban (in a light manner). I am so idle . . . A sworn enemy to work. With the greatest difficulty I can shake off inactivity to engage with business; but when I am once launched, there's no stopping me until every thing is settled.—It is ludicrous enough that this impatience to resume my idleness substitutes a merit to the eyes of the company.

Aurelly. I would advise you to closet yourselves before dinner. The mail sets off at night; and you'll then be able to send the money.

Saint-Alban. 'Tis well said.

Aurelly. Should they make any difficulty, they have a large parcel of mine: you may substitute your money for it, as it is of far greater consequence.

Saint-Alban. Nothing can oblige me more.

Aurelly. Come, come, set your mind at rest.

Melac, Sen. (exasperated, to Aurelly). And . . . Don't overcharge yours, my officious friend.

Aurelly. How so!

Melac, Sen. (disconcerted, to Saint-Alban). Sir, you call on me in a moment . . . quite unprovided . . .

Saint-Alban. What do you say, Sir?

Melac, Sen. I say . . . (*Aside.*) I feel myself overcome . . . I must own it.—What you ask of me is impossible.

Saint-Alban. Impossible! and you were going to set off?

Melac, Sen. Very true.

Saint-Alban. Do you know, Sir, what suspicions could be formed? . . .

Aurelly.

Aurelly (briskly). Fie, Mr. Saint-Alban.

Saint-Alban (to Aurelly). I beg your pardon; but the air, the tone, the language appear so plain.—That journey...

Aurelly. May there not be a thousand reasons?...

Saint-Alban. A moment, pray... Have you received the full amount of the different sums, Mr. Melac?

Melac, Sen. (overcome). I cannot deny the fact.

Saint-Alban. Can you send off to-day all the cash you have? (*Melac, Sen. returns no answer.*) Speak, Sir; for my orders are particular; and from your answer I must take immediate steps. (*Melac, Sen. seems full of thought, his head reclined on his hand.*)

Aurelly (quick). You don't answer?

Melac, Sen. (in a passion, to Aurelly). Cruel man! —(*To Saint-Alban, in a depressed voice*). I cannot comply with your demand under three weeks at least.

Saint-Alban. Three weeks!—I am not allowed to grant three days. The money is wanted... 'Tis with regret, Sir...

Melac, Sen. I can't help it;—but so many troubles never assailed an upright man. [*Exit.*]

Aurelly (hollowing out). Are you going?

Saint-Alban. Have you an idea of any such thing?

Aurelly. I believe he is out of his mind.

Saint-Alban. You are sensible that I cannot avoid...

Aurelly. Have confidence in me. Melac is not capable of a vile or dishonest act.

Saint-

Saint-Alban. Recollect then that he was going off. I should be accountable to the company for the event.

Aurelly. Sir You are going to expose an honest man; his son, his situation, his honor,—every thing is undone and ruined.

Saint-Alban. I am extremely sorry for it; but my orders are such that I cannot grant favours.

Aurelly. He has securities; what more can you desire? — I'll make myself answerable for every thing. Give me time to clear up . . .

Saint-Alban. A word in my turn.—I am not to be led astray. 'Tis not securities that are wanted; 'tis twenty thousand pounds, that I have announced, that are expected.—Can you advance that sum of money to-day?

Aurelly. At the very eve of payment?—With all the credit of the richest banker, he could not raise fifty pounds.

Enter PAULINE.

Pauline (uneasy). What can be the matter with Mr. Melac, uncle?—He was in a dreadful situation when I just left you. I offered to speak to him; he shut himself up hastily without answering me.

Aurelly. He! child! — There's a deficiency of twenty thousand pounds in his bank; nobody knows how or why. I want to clear up this point; but Mr. Saint-Alban refuses necessary time . . .

Pauline (frightened). Ah! Sir; if you have any regard for us . . .

Saint-Alban (tenderly). Regard! . . .

F

Aurelly.

Aurelly. Till to-morrow only, that I might discover . . .

Pauline. Till to-morrow, Sir . . . Can you deny me that favour?

Saint-Alban. Ah! Madam, I would resign my life to oblige you; but I am bound by sacred duties, which you, who fulfil your own so well, cannot disallow.

Aurelly. Can the grant of one day be such an incompatible favour? . . .

Saint-Alban. Do not presume on your influence; it is not becoming either the trust I am invested with, or my honor, that I should listen to you any longer.

Pauline (offended). Just as you think proper, Sir; but I have confidence enough in Mr. Melac's honesty to believe you are mistaken on his account, and that he will have no occasion for the support of his friends or the favours of his superiors.

Saint-Alban. I wish this may be the case, Madam! But, in the present situation of things, it is not proper I should accept an apartment in this house.—Pardon me if I leave you.

Aurelly (warmly). As to me, wherever you go, I shall not leave you. [*Exeunt Saint-Alban and Aurelly.*]

Pauline (solus,—greatly oppressed). What have I said? . . . A dreadful confusion had overpowered me.—I was too severe with him! . . . Has my fear betrayed my secret? . . . Oh, Melac! if he had read in my heart! . . . How much I might have injured your father!—He comes.

Enter

Enter MELAC, JUN. overjoyed.

Melac, Jun. Pauline ! Pauline ! My joy must appear in your presence.

Pauline. Your joy !

Melac, Jun. You know that all my concerns are related to our union.

Pauline. What a moment you chuse ! . . . And what a tone ! . . .

Melac, Jun. Were you to call me troublesome, audacious . . . My expressions are those of a lover who can henceforth offer you his heart and his hand.

Pauline. Your senses or mine have certainly taken leave.

Melac, Jun. Oh ! 'tis mine, 'tis mine ! The joy which overcomes me . . .

Pauline. The joy !

Melac, Jun. Has not your uncle just gone from here ?

Pauline. Every thing I hear is so opposite to his language . . .

Melac, Jun. He only meant to make you uneasy.

Pauline. To make me uneasy ! . . . How ? . . . Why should he frighten me ?

Melac, Jun. Mere pleasantry.

Pauline (offended). No one can indulge himself with so much cruelty.

Melac, Jun. What a charming passion !—She ravishes me !—and delights me more than my reversion itself.

Pauline. I don't comprehend you.

Melac, Jun. (briskly). They never said a word? . . . The reversion.—Yes, I have got it at last; Saint-Alban brought with him the confirmation of it; your uncle, who knew of it, kept it concealed from us, only to enjoy our surprise.—In the excess of my feelings, I left them to bring you the news.—I have been this quarter of an hour cursing the troublesome people who threw themselves in my way.—Ah, Pauline! instead of sharing this joy . . .

Pauline (in a voice almost suffocated). Have you not learnt something else?

Melac, Jun. No.

Pauline (aside). I cannot take the explanation upon myself . . . "Twould break his heart.

Melac, Jun. You weep, my dear Pauline.

Pauline. Unfortunate man!—You came to bring me charming tidings . . . And I must exchange them for dreadful news.

Melac, Jun. They wish to part us?

Pauline (hesitating). Ah! Melac! . . . If report says true . . . Your father . . .

Melac, Jun. My father?

Pauline. It is suspected . . .

Melac, Jun. What?

Pauline. That he has disposed of the money . . .

Melac, Jun. The money of his bank?

Pauline. That's what is said.

Melac, Jun. How shocking!

Pauline. Saint-Alban could find none.

Melac, Jun. Downright imposture; last night I counted myself twenty thousand pounds.—But he
loves

loves you ; and if he attempts to injure my father, 'tis only, be assured, to keep you from me.

Pauline. May you never have any other misfortune to fear.—No, my dear Melac, you'll never have rivals in the heart of Pauline.

Melac, Jun. You love me ?

Pauline. Let this confession support your courage. We shall have occasion for it.—Saint-Alban is jealous.—I tremble for the fate of your father.

Melac, Jun. Can you, Pauline, wrong him so much as to believe he is guilty ?

Pauline. Ah ! impute every thing to my fears.—But we are losing time. Run and console your father.

Melac, Jun. Console him !—I can only inspire him with anger for a perfidious man.

Pauline. If Saint-Alban was the only one to accuse him . . . But my uncle himself . . .

Melac, Jun. Your uncle ?

Pauline. He is returning.—You know his frankness, which does not always allow him to have for the unfortunate the regard they are so much in need of.

Melac, Jun. You chill my blood.

Pauline. Be present at the explanation. Exercise your good sense to prevent all acrimony.—If your father is embarrassed, my uncle is the only one from whom a speedy assistance may be expected.

Melac, Jun. (agitated). What ! cou'd your uncle be persuaded . . .

Pauline. Be careful, above all, while with him, not to forget yourself.—Recollect that our mutual
happi-

happiness is at stake.—(*With great earnestness*). My dear Melac . . . In the danger that threatens us, ah! . . . You will have deserved me, if you succeed in obtaining my uncle's consent.

Melac, Jun. O inconceivable contradiction! . . . No; I cannot comprehend . . . No matter; you shall be obeyed . . . I'll keep within bounds.—You will then know, Pauline, that no orders can be fulfilled like those which love executes. (*He kisses her hand*). [*Exeunt.*]

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT

A C T III.

MELAC, SEN. MELAC, JUN.

MELAC, SEN. (*dejected*).

DO not follow me, Melac !

Melac, Jun. How can I help it, father ?

Melac, Sen. I desire you.

Melac, Jun. Could I leave you in such a distressing moment ?

Melac, Sen. Your concern is troublesome . . . It offends me.

Melac, Jun. I know my father too well to suspect any thing that might be injurious to him. However should your goodness allow me to dive into a mystery . . .

Melac, Sen. Melac !

Melac, Jun. Will you persist, father, in depriving me of the means to serve you ? to soften at least your sorrows ?

Melac, Sen. There are duties whose performance is not suited to your age and vivacity.

Melac, Jun. You taught me respect for those which are sacred to you. Have confidence in the principles of your son ; they are your own.

Melac, Sen. (*with kindness*). You commence your career, my friend, when I finish mine ; thus, things wear

wear with us a different aspect. Concern for the past has but little weight with young men ; they sacrifice much to hope. But when old age furrows our face and contracts our frame, disgusted with the present, alarmed for the future, what is there remaining for man ? The only enjoyment then is to be satisfied with the past.—(*In a firm tone*). I have done what I ought to do ; I forbid you to press me any more.

Melac, Jun. The consequence of this day fills me with anxiety.

Melac, Sen. Saint-Alban has a liberal mind ; he will not inconsiderately sacrifice a man of whom he thought well of to this day.

Melac, Jun. Ah, father ! If this is the hope that supports your courage ; mine forsakes me entirely. —Saint-Alban is our enemy.

Melac, Sen. Melac, let us not defame the man who listens but to the voice of his duty.

Melac, Jun. (with spirit). He loves Pauline ; he returned here on her account only ; he thinks me his rival. Judge then whether he hates us, and if jealousy is not likely to make him carry things to any extremity.

Melac, Sen. Jealousy could alienate him . . . But how is it likely that Saint-Alban . . . ?

Melac, Jun. When Pauline entrusted me with this secret, she could not dissemble her concern for you.

Melac, Sen. What could be the cause of his jealousy ? . . . To frustrate his designs !—We !—Not one single instant of our lives would pass that we shouldn't exert ourselves to the utmost to prevail

on

on Aurelly to accede to so advantageous an offer for his niece, if he was mad enough to decline it!—Run then, Melac, to do away his error . . . But, better not. It is more proper that I should do it myself; and this evening . . . (*He attempts to go.*)

Melac, Jun. (throwing himself in the way). Ah! stop, father . . . She loves me. She has just owned it.—Have I then received her faith only to betray it the very same instant?

Melac, Sen. (surprised). Received her faith!

Melac, Jun. The first use I would then make of the privilege she has granted me, would be to transmit the same to my enemy.

Melac, Sen. (getting warm). Privilege!—What language!—What delirium!

Melac, Jun. By giving her up to Saint-Alban, I should overwhelm myself without effect.

Melac, Sen. Melac . . .

Melac, Jun. Pauline, ill treated, would despise me, without ratifying that worthless treaty.

Melac, Sen. (in a passion). What then, Sir! do you believe me so despicable already?—Have my misfortunes erased all respect?—You do not longer listen to me . . .

Melac, Jun. Ah! father!—Ah! Pauline!

Melac, Sen. Have you presumed that she would give herself to you against her uncle's consent?—You know little of her.—Aurelly never had the least idea of you, I am certain. What then can be your intent?

Melac, Jun. I am wild with despair.

G

Enter

Enter AURELLY,—seats himself in an arm-chair, wiping his face.

Melac, Jun. (trembling). You have just left Saint-Alban, Sir; have you prevailed on that merciless man?

Aurelly (harshly). Saint-Alban is not severe. He is a just man.—Entrusted by the company with pressing orders, he finds a deficiency to a considerable amount in a house which he rely'd on as his principal resource.—He objected to my proposals. I remained speechless.—He was just going to seize on the papers of Mr. . . .

Melac, Jun. (frightened). To seize on the papers!

Aurelly. 'Twas but with difficulty I could obtain time to come and gain some éclaircissement on an event so incredible.

Melac, Sen. It shocks me to give you pain, my friend, but it is out of my power to give any explanation.

Aurelly. Friend!—I would blush all my life for having been your friend, were you guilty of such infidelity.

Melac, Sen. Blush then . . . for I am guilty.

Aurelly (getting warm). You're guilty!

Melac, Jun. It cannot be.

Aurelly (more mildly). Could you be so imprudent as to have served some body with that money?—Speak . . . You have some memorandum, a title, or at least an excuse whereby your friends may be allowed to exert themselves in your behalf?

Melac,

Melac, Sen. (sharply). I never said that I lent money.

Aurelly. It was in your possession last Monday.

Melac, Jun. (trembling). Even yesterday, father; I saw it.

Aurelly. Four thousand pounds of your own, intended for the establishment of your son, where are they?

Melac, Sen. All the losses in the world would be less felt by me than the impossibility of justifying my conduct.

Aurelly. Do you observe silence with me?

Melac, Jun. Father . . .

Melac, Sen. The more I feel you're my friends, the less I have power to speak.

Aurelly. Me, your friend!—I am no longer so.

Melac, Jun. Ah! Sir.

Aurelly. "If 'twas me," he said this morning . . . Thus, by taking part for dishonest men, 'twas your own cause you were pleading.

Melac, Sen. I pleaded for none but unfortunate men.

Aurelly. With what composure!—I should die with confusion if any thing like it . . . But I see you withstand my reproaches!

Melac, Sen. Heaven grant I could have prevented them!

Aurelly. By a shameful flight.

Melac, Sen. I—fly!

Aurelly. Were you not going to set off? . . . But, wretched man; you waited only to disgrace yourself, and forget how to blush!

Melac, Jun. (affected). Ah! Sir.

Melac, Sen. (with dignity). Were you never blamed for the very act in which your virtue took pride?

Aurelly. (getting warm). To invoke virtue, when he is forfeiting his honor!

Melac, Jun. (to Aurelly, as feeling for his father). Sir . . .

Melac, Sen. (with mildness). Aurelly, I can put up with many things from you.

Aurelly. (with increasing warmth). So it is with these philosophers!—They do with indifference good or evil, just as it suits their purposes! . . .

Melac, Jun. (raising his voice). Mr. Aurelly! . . .

Aurelly. For ever crying up virtue they have no regard for, and engaged only for their own interests, which they never speak of! . . .

Melac, Jun. (getting warm). Mr. Aurelly! . . .

Aurelly (quicker). How could a principle of honesty prevail with those who never did good?—It is a mere pretence to deceive men with impunity!

Melac, Sen. (with a sigh). I may sometimes have deceived myself . . .

Aurelly (in a passion). An honest man that labours under mistake, is not ashamed to have his conduct investigated.

Melac, Sen. There are times when, compelled to silence, he must be justified with the testimony of his own heart . . .

Aurelly (out of patience). The testimony of his heart!—Self-interest supersedes every other idea!

Melac,

Melac, Sen. (roused by Aurelly's passion). Well ! unjust friend (*Aside.*) Ah ! Heaven ! what was I about to do ?

Aurelly. You was going to speak.

Melac, Sen. (with concern). I will not answer any more. (*He sits down.*)

Aurelly (with indignation). Ah ! you wound me deeply ; you render me for ever suspicious, mistrustful and callous.—Whenever I see the mask of virtue on any one's face, I'll remember you.

Melac, Jun. Sir, this reproach ! . . .

Aurelly. I'll say : Too long have I been seduced by that deceitful mask ; and I will shun that man.

Melac, Jun. Desist, Sir, from outrage.—What right can you have to use such language with my father ?

Aurelly. What right, young man ?—That right which every honest man has over a guilty one.

Melac, Jun. Is he guilty towards you ?

Aurelly. Yes ; since he disgraces himself.

Melac, Jun. (out of patience). Restrain your speech, or mine can no longer keep within bounds.

Melac, Sen. (rising). What a passion you are in, Melac !—He is in the right ; and if I had cause to blush for my conduct, the reproaches of this honest man . . . But leave us to ourselves.

Enter PAULINE.

Pauline. One single moment has destroyed the peace and comfort of our mansion ! . . . Ah ! uncle.

Aurelly.

Aurelly. You see me provoked to indignation by the conduct of the father, and threatened by the presumption of the son.

Pauline. Him! . . . You, Melac!

Melac, Jun. (trembling). He abuses my father most unmercifully.—Too long I have suffered!

Pauline (in a low voice). Imprudent man!

Melac, Jun. Pauline!

Melac, Sen. (to his son). Begone, I desire you.

Melac, Jun. (furious). Yes; I am going.—(Aside). But the odious instigator of so much cruelty.

Pauline (frightened). He is going to expose himself.

Melac, Sen. (seizes on the arm of his son). What have you said?

Melac, Jun. (distracted). I said . . . (striving to conceal his emotion) that I never witnessed so much cruelty. [Exit.

Pauline (looking at him with fear). Heaven! vouchsafe to avert the misfortunes that threaten us at this moment.

Aurelly. He insists on silence; and I cannot discover any thing.

Pauline (to Melac, Sen.) Ah! my good Sir; how can you fear to unbosom yourself with my uncle?—He loves you so faithfully.

Aurelly (with indignation). Me!—I love him?

Pauline (with eagerness). Yes, you love him. Do not deny it.

Aurelly (with concern). Well! yes, I do love him;—and that's my shame. But I do not esteem him any longer;—there's my misfortune. 'Tis horrid

rid for me to renounce the opinion I had of him. The loss of my whole fortune would have been less severely felt.

Melac, Sen. (moved). Aurelly, wait a few days before you pass judgment on your friend.—Your generous passion penetrates me with respect.—Believe that were it not for the most cogent reasons . . .

Aurelly. Can any reason withstand my entreaties?—Speak, unhappy man . . . guilty or not, if I can serve you . . .

Pauline. Consider what pain you plunge us into !

Melac, Sen. (penetrated). My dear friends, honor forbids my speaking.—I am not guilty yet ; but would become so, were I to remain here any longer. . . . The slightest indiscretion . . . Can't my constant friendship for you justify the present mystery?—If I admire the affections you display at this trying moment, I cannot be destitute myself of feelings that will not degrade a heart nearly breaking for the task it must still perform. [Exit.]

Pauline. I feel he speaks truth.

Aurelly (still warm). What an argument!—Thieves too are pleased with honest people ; for in the faith of these they find their account.—(*Milder.*) However, I must own, he moved me to the very soul.

Pauline. No ; he is not guilty . . . He must have rendered some important service, whose only merit, he conceives, is to remain unknown.

Aurelly. But to have betrayed his trust . . .

Pauline. With a man of Mr. Melac's character, I am inclined to respect even that which I cannot comprehend.

Aurelly.

Aurelly. Whatever use he may have made of that money, there can be no excuse for him . . . And to set off!

Pauline. An inward voice tells me that this apparent crime is, perhaps, with him, the last effort of a sublime virtue.—(*In a different voice.*) And his unfortunate son, uncle, have you no compassion for him?—To what extremity has the affection for his father carried him towards you, whom he reveres so perfectly!

Aurelly. He is passionate; but his heart is pure.—Ah! my Pauline! what I regret most is to have lost the power of settling on him the comfort of my old days.

Pauline (aside). What do I hear?—(*To Aurelly.*) Ah! Sir, do not forsake your friend. Be sure he'll justify your exertions for him.

Aurelly. Your weakness lessens the shame I felt for my own.. You urge me to serve him . . . Learn then that I have attempted so to do.—I offered my bond to Saint-Alban.

Pauline. He refuses it?

Aurelly. He has shown me such positive orders! . . . He cannot defer sending the sum he has announced.

Pauline (in an insinuating manner). Are there no means then to make up that sum?

Aurelly. Twenty thousand pounds!—At the very eve of payment!—Believe me, child, that were it not for the money that Dabins receives at this moment from London, I should have been myself much embarrassed.

Pauline

Pauline. You have often told me that you had large sums in paper, which could be discounted, if necessary.

Aurelly. 'Tis true; I have still in London twenty thousand pounds' worth, at my friend Prefort's.

Pauline. At Mr. Prefort's? . . . Isn't that paper good?

Aurelly. Most excellent; the same as those for which he is to remit me money this very day.—The whole, however, does not belong to me. There are twelve thousand pounds I cannot touch.—'Tis a deposit . . . sacréd.

Pauline. Your fortune is more than adequate to secure that sum to its owner.

Aurelly (warmly). Would you have me guilty of the breach of trust for which I reproach that unfortunate man?—A deposit is the only thing, perhaps, which cannot be compromised.—Money lent, one receives to make use of.—A thousand reasons can render even an imprudent use of it excusable; but a deposit,—we should die rather than violate it.

Pauline. If you were to speak to the person it belongs to?

Aurelly. Learn that this money has been collected for the express purpose of discharging a debt . . . an incalculable debt. It is intended to repair his wrongs, if possible . . . But you would charge me with being hard . . . You wish to see him.—Speak to him; you have my consent. He is ready to hear you . . . And that man is—myself.

Pauline (with joy). Ah! I breathe again; our friends shall be spared.

H

Aurelly.

Aurelly. Before being generous, Pauline, one should be just.

Pauline. Who would dare to suspect you of not being so ?

Aurelly. Yourself, whom I am going to entrust at last with the secret of that money. Listen and be my judge . . . When young, I was possessed of sensibility.—The daughter of a gentleman (with a small fortune, I own) permitted me to ask her of her parents. My demand was rejected with disdain.—Overcome with despair for the refusal, we listened only to passion. A secret marriage united us.—But her proud family, instead of ratifying the contract, confined that unfortunate victim, and overloaded her with so much ill treatment, that she lost her life, in giving birth to a daughter . . . which those cruel parents immured from every eye . . .

Pauline. How inhuman !

Aurelly. I thought she died with her mother ; I wept long for their loss ; and at last married the niece of old Chardin, whom I succeeded in business.—Accident, however, discovered to me that my daughter was still living. I then exerted myself ; I secreted her ;—and, since the death of my wife, have laid by every year a sum of money likely to render her independent of my son.—This is the unfortunate owner of these twelve thousand pounds.—Do you believe, child, there can be a more sacred deposit ?

Pauline. No . . . None so sacred.

Aurelly. Can I dispose of that money ?

Pauline. You cannot do it.—Poor Melac !—But you are moved ; I am so myself.—How is it then that

that that unfortunate daughter is unknown to me? —Why do you make me enjoy the comforts of a situation she is deny'd?

Aurelly. You know the prejudice.—My niece is honorably with me; my daughter could not live in my house without scandal.—Thus far, the man who forfeits his own morals is not exempt from respecting those of others.

Pauline (warmly). I burn with desire to discharge towards her all the obligations I owe you. Let us go and meet her. She is your daughter;—can she be otherwise than compassionate and generous?

Aurelly. What are you saying, Pauline? Her whole fortune!—The only compensation for her misfortune; do you wish to wrest it from her?

Pauline. We shall have performed our duty toward our friends.

Aurelly. She owes the preference to herself.

Pauline. She may grant it to us.

Aurelly. Put yourself in her place . . . Such a proposal . . .

Pauline. Ah! how I would answer it!

Aurelly. Should she deny us?

Pauline. We will not love her the less for it. But let us have no occasion to reproach ourselves.

Aurelly. You insist upon it?

Pauline (quickly). A thousand, thousand reasons urge me to know her.

Aurelly (with a suffocated voice). Ah! my Pauline!

Pauline. What is the matter?

Aurelly. Thy sensibility lays my soul bare ; and my secret . . .

Pauline. Do not regret your confidence.

Aurelly. My secret . . . forces its way with my tears.

Pauline. Uncle . . .

Aurelly. Your uncle ! . . .

Pauline. What suspicions !

Aurelly. You are going to hate me.

Pauline. Speak.

Aurelly. Oh, precious child !

Pauline. Ah ! yet again !

Aurelly (*extending his arms to receive her*). Thou art that beloved daughter.

Pauline (*throwing herself in his arms*). Oh, my father !

Aurelly (*supports her*). My daughter ! my dear daughter !—Must I, for the first time I indulge myself with that appellation, pronounce it with such concern !

Pauline (*going to kneel*). Ah, father !

Aurelly (*prevents her*). Console me, my dear child ; tell me that you forgive the wretchedness of your birth.—How many times have I lamented your hard fate !

Pauline (*with great emotion*). Do not embitter the joy I feel in embracing a father so deserving my whole affection.

Aurelly. Well ! my Pauline ! my dear Pauline ! (for that was the name of your mother, whom I loved so well)—direct,—command.—Thou hast wrested

wrested my secret from me.—But, without thy consent, could I dispose of thy fortune?

Pauline. It is your own, father . . . Ah, if it was mine! . . .

Aurelly. It is strictly your own property.—More than the two thirds of it is the produce of the œconomy with which you govern this house. Only prescribe me the conduct you wish me to observe for the present.

Pauline (quickly). Can there be any doubt?—Go to Saint-Alban; take that sum of money with you, offer it to him.—It will serve to disarm him, and save our friends.

Aurelly. What will then remain for you?

Pauline. Your goodness.

Aurelly. I may die.

Pauline. How cruel!

Aurelly (presses her to his bosom). My heart is full. Yours is equally so.—You had better retire.—I must recover a little from the pangs this conversation has excited.

Pauline (deeply impressed). Oh, Melac . . . How happy I am! [Exit.

Aurelly (solus). My emotion overwhelms me.—What value the gratitude of that child sets on the cares he has taken of her education! . . . Well then . . . However wretched his conduct, he must be extricated from these difficulties.—What his merits no longer demand, duty prescribes me to perform . . . On account of a friendship fifty years standing . . . For the sake of his son, who is a deserving young man.

man.—The most immediate thing now, is to see Saint-Alban.—(*He sighs.*) No; 'tis not the money I regret;—but 'tis, that, in the bottom of my heart, esteem can no longer find a place for Melac.

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT

A C T IV.

ANDRÉ (*solus*).

“IMBÉCIL!—Blockhead!—Do dis.—Go dare.—Have my door shut pour every body.—Open dee door pour Monseer Saint-Alban.”—Thousand ordres à la fois! Just as if one was a vitch for remember all dat! . . . Because dey are quarrel, a pauvre servant must. . . Eh! how me should like! . . . Me would like dat no one be more equal dan dee oder. . . Masters bien atrappés! . . . Oh, yes! and my vages; who would pay me? . . .

Enter SAINT-ALBAN.

Saint-Alban. Is Mr. Aurelly at home, André?

André. No, Sir;—pour personne;—but 'tis not for you, I say dat.—You must come in you.—He shall come down.—Me go to tell him?

Saint-Alban. No; he may be engaged. I'll wait. (*Paces the stage, talking to himself.*) Duty presses me to act . . . Love forbids me . . . Jealousy . . . No; my heart never was more tormented. Do they love each other? The concern which escaped her this morning made it too evident! . . . André?

André. Monsieur, vous call me?

Saint-Alban (aside). This fellow is ingenuous; I must

must make him talk.—(*Loud, as he seats himself.*)
André, my good fellow ?

André. Monsieur is more good dan me merit.

Saint-Alban. Where is your young mistress ?

André. Ah ! Monsieur.—On was so gay dee oder voyages when you arrived !—Dis not by interest me say dat ;—but because you loge no more here ; dat give so much pain to every body.—Mamselle cries, cries, cries ; and our master !—Dee dinner was served : Mr. Melac, his son, no personne sat à table ;—nor Master neider . . . nor Mameselle neider.

Saint-Alban (to himself). Not the young lady !—Shed tears !—Not to take any thing !—There's more than friendship in that ; gratitude don't go so far.

André. Me so chagrine, dat, en vérité, all my business but my meals remain to be done to-day.

Saint-Alban. But tell me, André, don't they speak of marrying your young lady ?

André. Ah ! oui, très-souvent.—Many people demand her ; but dee diable, Master will not.

Saint-Alban. Does she then appear disappointed and alarmed by these refusals ?

André. She ?—Ah ! you know her vell !—A husband ? . . . She cares much for dat . . . Like me ; ven she is gracious to every body, look after dee whole house, saves dee fortune of her uncle, and gives to dee pauvres, she is as gay as a lark.

Saint-Alban (aside). What praise in an aukward mouth !—He interests me.—(*Pulls out his purse.—To André.*) Here, my friend, take this, and tell me something else.

André.

André. Un guinée ! . . . Oh ! . . . But if vat Monseer vant to know be bad ?

Saint-Alban. No ;—that's to reward your honesty.—Among those who address your young mistress, I should think that young Melac . . .

André. Vell ! Monseer may believe me if he pleases, but dat idea too came to me more dan an hundred times for dem.—Vould dey make an pretty couple ?

Saint-Alban (with concern). Pauline and Melac ?

André. Ah ! dat she is so prettily turned to his humour !—And dat he loves her ! he loves her !

Saint-Alban (to himself). He loves her ! . . . Why should I be surprised at it ?—I ought to have expected it.—Who could help loving her !

André. Dere's none who could do dat but dose who never saw her.

Saint-Alban. And do you think your young mistress grants him a return ?

André (trying to comprehend). A return ?

Saint-Alban. Yes.

André (laughing foolishly). Ho ! ho ! ho ! I see bery near vat dee gentleman means . . . But, hold, I must not tell lie ;—en conscience ; all dat I know is dat I know vell, dat I know noting.

Saint-Alban (to himself). If he was preferred by her ; could they, in the intimacy which subsists between their relations, have failed being united ?

André. They are not disunited for dat.—Alldo' she always scold him, he cannot be one hour widout coxing her ; and vhen he can catch some moral, he goes away so pleased . . .

Saint-Alban. 'Tis enough, friend.—(*To himself.*) Undoubtedly they expected that reversion to conclude . . . And I bring it!—I am forging the very obstacle I fear!—Ah! it provokes me to jealousy. . . How near being unjust one is when in love!

André (aside). Dose great geniuses must have much wit to tink so of someting by demselves!—For my part, do all I can, dee moment I want to tink of someting, all's a confusion, and I fall asleep immediately. [*Exit André, on seeing his master coming in.*]

Enter AURELLY.

Aurelly. Ah, pardon, Sir; you are before-hand with me. I was just going to call upon you.

Saint-Alban. I come to inform you that it is utterly out of my power to put off any longer.—This day, granted to your entreaties, is almost expired without having made any alteration in our affairs.

Aurelly. A material alteration.

Saint-Alban. Has the money been procured?

Aurelly. I am bound for Melac.

Saint-Alban. You pay the twenty thousand pounds?

Aurelly. Twelve thousand I borrow; the rest is my own;—the whole in a check on my correspondent in London, payable on sight.

Saint-Alban (aside). The mariage is certain; such sacrifices cou'dn't be made . . . (*To Aurelly.*) I admire your generosity. I'll receive the sum you offer; but . . . I cannot help giving an account . . .

Aurelly. What necessity?

Saint-

Saint-Alban. What you do for Melac, cannot clear him for the breach of trust he is guilty of.

Aurelly. When you lose nothing?

Saint-Alban. The same thing could take place again; and you will not be for ever disposed . . .

Aurelly. In that case, Sir, I must recal my word. 'Tis his honour only that induces me; and if I don't save it in discharging his debt, it is unnecessary I should strip myself . . .

Saint-Alban. You do not approve my conduct.

Aurelly. I am quite a stranger to your politics. Let Melac be guilty of breach of trust, or imprudence only; by rejecting my conditions, you expose yourself . . .

Saint-Alban. I do not reject them; but I must explain.

Aurelly. I am all attention.

Saint-Alban. You wish to have the veil entirely drawn over?

Aurelly. Entirely so.

Saint-Alban. I will, to serve you, do the utmost in my power.

Aurelly. But what bounds do you prescribe to that power?

Saint-Alban. The same that you would yourself. —You cannot expect I should save his credit, at the expence of my honour?

Aurelly. To offer such a thing would be equally absurd and unjust.

Saint-Alban. The interests of the company being secured through your offer, the man can be spared the disgrace he deserved; but were I to entrust him

any longer with the receipt, I should become culpable . . .

Aurelly. You will then deprive him of his situation ?

Saint-Alban. Would you have him continued ?

Aurelly. Ah ! Sir, I beg of you . . .

Saint-Alban. Do more.

Aurelly. How ?

Saint-Alban. You are a man of honour ; do you take upon yourself to advise me to it ? (*Aurelly looks down without reply.*)—I hope you will discriminate between what I can grant and what duty exacts of me. I accept the money ; I will remain silent ; but I do insist on his resigning his place instantly, under whatsoever pretence he'll think proper.

Aurelly. I own he does not deserve to keep it ;—But his son?—That reversion?—So many applications to obtain it ? . . .

Saint-Alban. His son ! who could be answerable for him ?

Aurelly. Me.

Saint-Alban. That's doing much for them.

Aurelly. I have twenty ways of securing him.

Saint-Alban (*ruminating*). I confess that . . . I . . . I have no personal objection against the young man ; and, inclined as I am to ask from you a favour for myself . . .

Aurelly. Could I serve you ?

Saint-Alban. In a point the most important.

Aurelly (*eagerly*). Hold me for a disgraced man, if I deny you.

Saint-

Saint-Alban. You encourage me to speak. You know my fortune and my character; you have an adorable niece; she has enchanted me; I—love her, and I ask her hand from you as the most invaluable favour . . .

Aurelly (with surprise). You ask me, . . . My Pauline?

Saint-Alban. Are you under any engagement?

Aurelly (embarrassed). Indeed that's not the case; but if you knew her better . . .

Saint-Alban. I have studied her more than you are aware of.

Aurelly. That child has no fortune.

Saint-Alban. Deserving as she is, it is of a trifling consideration.

Aurelly (aside). How shall I release myself from this new embarrassment!

Saint-Alban. You flattered me I should not be rejected.

Aurelly. Sir! . . . You are not made for that . . .

Saint-Alban. And however.

Aurelly (embarrassed). Rest assured she is too much honoured by your choice; and that no difficulty will arise on my side . . . But . . .

Saint-Alban. You deny her to me?

Aurelly. Believe that . . . Before I give you any answer, I must inform my niece . . .

Saint-Alban. Remember, Sir, that you are under no engagement.

Aurelly. And Melac's business.

Saint-Alban. This evening we shall settle two at a time.

[Exit.
Aurelly

Aurelly (solus). He is going dissatisfied.—What a world is this, and how one is tossed about! . . . Both father and son are lost, if he believes himself refused . . . And how could I take upon myself to accept him? . . . The money! . . . Can money save them still? —No matter, I must not let him have that pretext to hurt them . . . And I should like to know why all this confusion? Because a wretched man, who, if one attended to the voice of duty, ought never to be looked upon, has forgot himself, and for a sordid interest . . .

Enter DABINS.

Aurelly (continues) . . . Where do you come from, Dabins? four different times I have been in the counting-house to speak to you.

Enter MELAC, SEN.

Aurelly (perceiving Mr. Melac) . . . Ah! here's the other. Better to retire than to go into a passion.

[*Exit Aurelly.*

Melac, Sen. (looking at him as he goes off). O respectable friend! (*To Dabins*). What business is it that's so urging, Mr. Dabins?

Dabins. Sir! 'Tis with concern I mention it: 'Tis no longer time to keep silence. I must declare every thing.

Melac, Sen. (agitated). To declare every thing: What does that mean?

Dabins. The affair is on the moment of being exposed: Appearances criminate you.

Melac,

Melac, Sen. Appearances can affect none but him who feels himself guilty.

Dabins. What will you oppose to false judgments, to abuse and clamours?

Melac, Sen. Nothing: silence and fortitude that instils a proper esteem of one's self.

Dabins. The fortune of your friend is adequate . . . measures should be taken . . .

Melac, Sen. (impatient). And if I speak a word, he fails to-morrow morning . . .

Dabins (on the same tone.) And, if you don't speak, this very night you are lost . . . No: I can not suffer . . .

Melac, Sen. (with a firm tone and manner). Mr. Dabins, remember that your father dying, did not recommend you in vain to my beneficence:—Remember that I brought you up, that I placed you at Aurelly's, that my only esteem for you determined his confidence;—Would you then forfeit that esteem? Besides, is it not the first duty of an honest man, to keep the secret he is entrusted with?

Dabins. Oh, Sir! when discretion is more detrimental than useful . . .

Melac, Sen. Which of us is more likely to judge of my interest? . . . But I am getting warm; and in two words I may silence you.—What's to be done in this our common apprehension? We are to weigh every one's danger, and to remove the most imminent?

Dabins. It is so, Sir.

Melac, Sen. Should I prefer myself to my friend, what will then be his fate?—When a merchant is
ho-

honoured with public confidence, no excuse can be offered for a failure in his payments. His credit receives the fatal blow; 'tis an evil without remedy; and to Aurelly 'tis death.

Dabins. There is indeed every reason to fear that will be the case.

Melac, Sen. If I remain silent, suspicion, it is true, may affect my honour: But, when I declare a service that Aurelly's great fortune renders a matter of course,—let me be judged with what rigour I may, 'tis even doubtful whether I should be upbraided for it.—Being then left to chuse between his unavoidable loss, and the uncertain danger which menaces me, do you believe I could be advised by a blind friendship, that would disgrace my judgment?—No, Sir; I have pronounced as a third person would have done, by preferring, not that which is convenient to me, but that, which suits circumstances; not what I can do, but what I ought to do. You have heard me?

Dabins. Sir, I shall observe secrecy;—but as an example for men, 'twould be necessary that such acts . . .

Melac, Sen. Maxim and praise belong to idle men. Let us attend to our duty;—the pleasure of having performed it, is the only reward truly worthy the action . . . What is my son doing? I am uneasy about him. Have you seen him?

Dabins. Ah! 'tis on his account, above all, that I press you. He shed before me such bitter tears; and left me with an impatience, with a sentiment so painful . . . But where would be the danger of unbosoming yourself to him? encouraged by your example,

example, he would get calm, he would console you.

Melac, Sen. Console me! My friend, the experience of my whole life has shewn me that the courage to concentrate one's pains, adds to the power of repelling them.—With you, I feel myself weaker already than in solitude.—What relief could I derive from my son? I fear his pain less than his enthusiasm; and, if I am hardly master of my own secret, how could I keep within bounds a disposition so ardent as that he owns?

Enter MELAC, JUN. plunged in a profound reverie.

Melac, Sen. Here he comes. You have drawn his true picture. *(They retire to the back of the stage).*

Dabins. Do speak to him, Sir.

Melac, Sen. Let us avoid a needless exercise of our sensibility.

Melac, Jun. (solus,—walks slowly, appears overwhelmed, and gets warm by degrees, as he speaks). Ah that odious Saint-Alban! . . . I have sought for him every where, and could not meet him . . . Should my father's disgrace be public already?—They keep at a distance, I am shunned . . . In one moment I lose fortune, honour, all my hopes . . . And Pauline! . . . Pauline! . . . She avoids me now . . . Generosity is transient . . . the impulse of the moment . . . But reflection has soon destroyed that first presage of sensibility.

K

Enter

Enter PAULINE.—She hears the last sentences of her lover: she perceives his distress, and approaches with lively emotion.

Melac, Jun. (perceives her, and goes on) . . . Let not a barren compassion bring you towards me, Madam; I am sensible I have lost you . . . I know all the horror of my fate. Leave me to myself and to my miseries.

Pauline. Cruel man! . . .

Melac, Jun. Your consolations would only aggravate him.

Pauline. How misfortune renders you hard and unjust! The fear that one should think ill of you, gives you a bad opinion of every one's heart—that ardent propensity led you already to behave rude to my uncle . . .

Melac, Jun. (with animation). He insulted my father. With what cruelty he developed all the horrors of our situation!—If he had not been your uncle . . .

Pauline. How ungrateful! at the very instant you are going to be indebted to him for every thing; when his attachment prompts him to pay the whole sum to Saint-Alban.

Melac, Jun. (with joy). What do you say? will he save our honour?

Pauline. He does more . . . His heart that cherishes you . . .

Melac,

Melac, Jun. (quickly.) Be quick, Pauline, tell me all—don't be afraid to make my happiness complete. He gives me his niece?

Pauline (with timidity). Ah! Melac. . . Speak no longer of his unfortunate niece.

Melac, Jun. How?

Pauline. His daughter . . .

Melac, Jun. His daughter!

Pauline. His daughter, the offspring of a secret union, who knows you, loves you, offers to your father twelve thousand pounds she holds from the liberality and œconomy of her own.

Melac, Jun. (with indignation). As a premium for marrying me! . . . We were not abased enough; we wanted this additional disgrace.

Pauline (weeping). I was well aware that your proud spirit would reject the offer.

Melac, Jun. (furious). It strikes me with horror!—The service itself, the person that tenders, and renders it; I detest them all . . . That is his reason then for postponing our union?—He kept that shame in store for me: He did despise me even before misfortune had reduced me to suffer every kind of indignity. But, I do swear it at your feet, Pauline, the girl without name, without settlement, and disowned by her parents, will never be mine.

Pauline. You judge her wrong; she had only your father in view.

Melac, Jun. My father! shall infamy then be the only relief for our present disgrace? . . . You weep, my dear Pauline!—are you afraid that necessity

would compel me at last to contract a worthless engagement.

Pauline (provoked). No: I am not even any longer so fortunate as to fear any thing of the kind. You passed sentence both on yourself and me. The wretched woman you insult with so much inhumanity . . .

Melac, Jun. (alarmed). That wretched woman?

Pauline. Is now before you.

Melac, Sen. You?

Pauline (falling back on a chair). My heart was rent with that news, and you have completed my distraction.

Melac, Jun. (falling at her feet). Oh! misery! . . . Pauline! . . . Could you have set this trap to render me guilty? . . .

Pauline. Leave me.

Melac, Jun. Why not inform me? . . .

Pauline. Did you allow it! your rage forced from you the dreadful truth. Sir, 'tis no longer time to disown your sentiments.

Melac, Jun. (rises frantic). Can you avail yourself of an error that was your own working?—Can you oppose to me the confusion of a despair you yourself gave birth to?—I apprehended the powerful engines that were set in motion against us.—I said: I am losing her.—In your presence I was arming myself with all the fortitude I foresaw I should be in need of.—Am I then an unnatural man? a monster?—who could be savage enough to impute to innocent beings, an accident they could not prevent?

Pauline (weeping). No: no.

Melac,

Melac, Jun. (quickly). Can the fault of parents deprive their children of one qualification, of one single virtue?—Far from it, Pauline; and you justify this fact; Nature seems pleased to make them amends for our cruel prejudices.

Pauline. Such prejudices command no less respect, however.

Melac, Jun. (warmly). It is unjust; and I shall glory in trampling it under feet.

Pauline. It will exist with others.

Melac, Jun. My happiness depends on you alone.

Pauline. We are soon disgusted with a choice that meets nobody's approbation.

Melac, Jun. Mine deserves an honourable exception.

Pauline. But will not obtain it.

Melac, Jun. It will be the more valuable to me.—Do not aggravate a chimerical misfortune. Ah! be more just to yourself;—all that does not depend from the caprice of men, has been lavishly bestowed upon you; and should my love be susceptible of improvement, that injustice of fate would only heighten it.

Pauline (with dignity). Melac, a wife ought to be intitled to the respect of her husband. I should blush before mine.—No more on this subject. I will nevertheless make a sacrifice of my fortune to your father. A profound retreat is the only asylum suited to me: happy if your remembrance don't follow me there to disturb my days. (*She rises.*)

Melac, Jun. (in despair). What a heart have you then received from nature!—You enjoy my torments!

ments!—Pauline! desist from that odious project, or I can no longer answer . . . Oh! day for ever to be detested . . . I am distracted . . . Ah! my life shall be the forfeit . . . (*He throws himself on a sofa.*)

Pauline (*aside*). He frightens me!—I cannot leave him.—(*To Melac, Jun.*) Melac, my friend, my brother . . .

Melac, Jun. (distracted). Me, your friend!—I, your brother!—No; I am nothing to you. Be gone, cruel; you can no longer delude me. The poisoned shaft you pierced my heart with, can only be extracted with my life. To set an horrid snare for me, and then make me answerable for the insane language despair extorted from me! Ah! 'tis such a refinement on cruelty! . . .

Pauline. Hear me, Melac.

Melac, Jun. I can listen no longer. You have never loved me. I can no longer listen to a woman who flies to a mean subterfuge to renounce me.

Pauline (with great emotion). Well! my dear Melac, I do not renounce you.—Your ardour affects me, more, perhaps, than becomes the unfortunate Pauline. No, I will not renounce you.—But, for your father's sake, endeavour to curb that distraction that kills me.

Melac, Jun. (rising). Do you know, Pauline, what you are promising me? . . . Do you know it well?—If ever you recollect . . . If ever . . . (*Falling on his knees*) Swear that you will forget the blasphemies I feel horror for having uttered before you.—Swear it before we part.

Pauline. May you forget them yourself!

Melac,

Melac, Jun. Swear that you will restore me your heart.

Pauline. Restore it—ingrate!—It never ceased to be yours.

Melac, Jun. (rising). Well! pardon me. I am undeserving mercy; but, should I ever be bold enough to solicit it . . .

Enter AURELLY.

Pauline (to Melac, with fear). Here's my father.

Melac, Jun. (steps forward to meet Aurelly). Ah! Sir; if the bitterest repentance could atone for a guilty passion! If the most heart-felt concern for the offence I gave you . . .

Aurelly. Offence!—No, my friend; I felt your passion less than the honest sentiment that caused it.—Ask Pauline what I said to her of it.

Melac, Jun. I know the effects of your friendship; and my gratitude . . .

Aurelly. I am pleased with it; but you are indebted to me for my good will only. Things are far from being settled.

Pauline. Notwithstanding your offers?

Melac, Jun. What has then prevented . . .?

Aurelly. A most extraordinary circumstance.—I spoke to Saint-Alban; he accepts the money; but he was nevertheless going to write to the company.—Honour, situation, reversion,—every thing was lost.

Melac, Jun. How unfeeling!

Aurelly. Great bustle.—He seemed to come to terms.—I believed every thing settled: I embraced him, expressing my wish for the power to serve him in my turn.

—He

—He caught me at my word. In the excess of my joy, I pledged my honour to serve him.—(*To Pauline.*) Listen to the conclusion.

Melac, Jun. (aside). I tremble.

Aurelly. “You have a charming niece, I love her, I adore her, and I ask you to give me her hand.”

Pauline. Just Heaven!

Melac, Jun. (aside). I foresaw it.

Aurelly (to Pauline). You will readily conceive how embarrassed I was to answer him.

Pauline. I see the evil. It can't be recalled.

Aurelly. No; but when he asked me your hand, I could not, without consulting you, entrust him with the secret of your birth.—I come for that express purpose.—What shall I tell him?

Pauline (with composure). Do you think he would act with rigour towards Mr. Melac if he were refused?

Aurelly. Refused!—What right could I have to insist on his keeping his word, when I forfeit mine? 'Tis then that every thing should be lost . . . But what's to be done? He will have every thing settled at once; he is waiting for an answer.

Pauline (looking at Melac, sighing). Allow him to receive it from me.—Let him come.

Melac, Jun. (aside, with fear). Let him come!

Pauline. It is material I should speak to him.

Aurelly. He'll be here in a moment.—I know your principles, child; dispose of yourself according to your inclination.—I cannot trust in safer hands interests so dear to my heart. [*Exit.*

Melac, Jun. (trembling). Pauline!!!

Pauline.

Pauline. You see your father's danger is imminent ;—what interest could balance that ?

Melac, Jun. Ah, my father ! my father ! . . . (*Stammering*) Thus you recal Saint-Alban ?

Pauline. My seeing him is indispensable. Allow it, Melac, it must be.—You must return me my promise.

Melac, Jun. (containing his passion). No ; you can betray me ; but I shall not be upbraided for having contributed to it by a base consent.

Pauline (with tenderness). Should I ask for it, thou ungrateful man, if I intended to make an improper use of it ?—Who has told you that I mean to marry him ?

Melac, Jun. Can you command your refusal ?

Pauline. 'Tis ungenerous in you thus to overwhelm my soul.—Ah ! I had strength to combat my own sorrows ; I have none to encounter yours.

Melac, Jun. Pauline !

Pauline. Think of your father, of your respectable father, and you will blush to expect from me the example of a courage you ought to give me.

Melac, Jun. (suffocated with sorrow). I feel I cannot exist without your esteem ; I am in need of my own. My father must be saved . . . at the expence of my life.—Ah, Pauline !

Pauline. Ah, Melac !

[*Exeunt at different sides of the stage.*]

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

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ACT

A C T V.

PAULINE, *alone, with a note in her hand,—appears greatly agitated,—she walks about, sits down, and rises again.*

THIS moment decides our fate. (*Reading.*) He is waiting for my orders, he says . . . How audacious with their insulting submission! . . . Why should I tremble? The confession I am going to make can be but honourable to me . . . Ah! . . . My tears flow, and I can hardly support myself . . . My situation is inconceivable . . . Should he find me in tears . . . (*She sits down.*) Well! let him see me. Am I not unhappy enough to be pardoned a trifling weakness?

Enter ANDRÉ.

André. Mr. Saint-Alban.

Pauline. One moment, André. (*Endeavouring to dry her tears,—walks about, looks in the glass, and sighs.*)

André. But, Mamselle, Mr. Saint-Alban.

Pauline (with impatience). What of Saint-Alban?

André. He comes from your uncle.—He has un si charmant coat!

Pauline.

Pauline (to herself). 'Tis in vain. It is impossible for me . . . *(To André, seating herself.)* Show him in.

Enter SAINT-ALBAN, in full dress.—He enters with diffidence, and remains at some distance from Pauline.

Saint-Alban. I come, as you ordered, Madam.

Pauline (rises and bows).—(Aside.) Ordered, indeed! *(She appears as if prevented from speaking by smothered indignation.—She points to a chair.)*

Saint-Alban (approaches, looking at her, and, after some silence—) My presence seems to cause an alteration in you; Mr. Aurelly has, however, just assured me . . . *(André brings a seat to Saint-Alban.)*

Pauline (with some difficulty at first, and taking courage by degrees). Yes . . . At my own request . . . Be seated, Sir.—This embarrassed countenance is less suited to you than to her whom your intentions render confused and wretched. *(She sits down.)*

[Exit André.]

Saint-Alban. You, wretched! Heaven forbid I ever should obtain you on those terms!

Pauline. You avail yourself, however, of the gratitude I owe to Mr. Melac to exact my hand . . .

Saint-Alban (seats himself). Do me the favour to recollect that my love did not wait for this event to declare itself. You know that I wished to be indebted to yourself, and that my first aim was the acquisition of your esteem . . .

Pauline. Which with you accounts for little.

Saint-Alban. Have the goodness to inform me how I could prove best the value I set upon it.

Pauline. This is the way, Sir; if you think yourself bound in honour to return a rigorous account to your partners, can I esteem a man who seems to recollect his duties but to sacrifice them to the first whim he would have gratified? And, should this obligation be suggested only to avail yourself of such, what am I to think of him who sports with the misfortunes of others, and makes the honour of a respectable family dependent on the caprice of love and the refusal of a young girl?

Saint-Alban (rather confused). I have no cause to blush for having forgotten any one of my duties. But, granting that the wish to please you could have led me astray . . . I'll own, Madam, that I did not expect you should be the first to upbraid me for it.

Pauline. The first reproof originated with yourself, when you stipulated for your silence.

Saint-Alban (quickly). My silence!—Whatever might be the consequence, it is promised without conditions. Thus far, divested of every apprehension for your friends, you are at full liberty to pierce my heart by rejecting my hand.

Pauline (with firmness). Perhaps you thought I had some fortune, or expected that my uncle would supply . . .

Saint-Alban (briskly). Pardon me for interrupting you again; I have been explicit on that point. I desire no other fortune you could bring me but yourself.—'Tis you, and you alone, I wish for.

Pauline.

Pauline. Your generosity, Sir, excites mine; for 'tis generosity, doubtless, to own (when I could secrete it) a motive of refusal more humiliating for me than the want of fortune.

Saint-Alban. Your father has told me every thing. (*Pauline appears extremely surprised*). I admire you; and this is my answer. I am independent; love has disposed of your hand to me; reflection approves the gift, if your heart is as much at liberty as mine is engaged to you; but, on this point only, I dare to insist on the utmost frankness.

Pauline. You act so nobly, that the least subterfuge would be a crime:—learn then the secret most painful to me (*they rise—Pauline sighs, and looks down*). My whole youth past with Melac, the same education received together, a conformity of principles, of talents, of misfortune perhaps . . .

Saint-Alban. (*penetrated*). You love him?

Pauline. This is the last confession my gratitude owed to you.

Saint-Alban. To what a test do you put my virtue?

Pauline. All my reliance indeed was on your virtue.

(*MELAC, JUN. appears in the back of the stage.*)

Saint-Alban. I perceive what you expect from me.

Pauline (*with warmth*). I'll tell you every thing. I will not fail to supply virtue with arms against misfortune.

fortune. Melac had my heart and my word; but when my father gave us to understand the reward you expected for your mercy to his father, he then sacrificed all his hopes to his salvation.

Saint-Alban (slowly). Was he acquainted with your real situation before that day?

Pauline. We were all equally ignorant of it.

Saint-Alban (passionately). He don't love you.

Pauline. He will break his heart.

Saint-Alban. The moment he learns the secret of your birth, he gives you up! He affects generosity . . . fearful of displeasing you, Madam, I will not enlarge my reflections;—but he does not love you.

Melac, Jun. (advances with fury). O Heaven! I don't love her!

Saint-Alban (coolly). Sir . . . Who could think you were so near?

Melac, Jun. I don't love her, do you say?

Saint-Alban. I never disguised my thoughts.

Melac, Jun. You impute to me as a crime the sacrifice you rendered necessary?

Saint-Alban (coolly). Listeners seldom hear good of themselves.

Melac, Jun. To accuse me of not loving her!

Saint-Alban. I am sorry for it; but I said so.

Melac, Jun. (with concern). Did you believe him, Pauline?

Pauline. You'll ruin us.

Melac, Jun. (with transport). Do not expect any thing from a man so illiberal.

Saint-Alban (firmly). Sir, too much heat may render one imprudent.

Melac,

Melac, Jun. (bitterly). And too much prudence, Sir . . .

Pauline (to Melac, with passion). I forbid you to speak another word.

Melac, Jun. (to Pauline). To accuse me of not loving you, when I am reduced to the extremity of renouncing you, or never to deserve you!

Pauline. You forget your father!

Melac, Jun. (looking at Saint-Alban with a menacing air). Should I forget him, Pauline . . .

Pauline (to Saint-Alban). He is blind with despair.

Melac, Jun. (with a reserved passion). One word will set all to rights. You have, it is said, promised not to write against my father?

Saint-Alban (mastering himself). Do you interrogate me?

Melac, Jun. Did you promise it?

Pauline (to Melac). He has pledged himself.

Saint-Alban (with warmth, to Pauline). On no other consideration but you, Madam.

Melac, Jun. (grinning with passion). Ah! . . . 'Tis that only which prevents me from contending with you for her hand. She is yours . . . But be a man of honour—(*He approaches*) keep your word with my father, then you'll see . . .

Saint-Alban (surprised). Keep my word! . . .

Pauline (throwing herself between them). Mr. Saint-Alban.

Saint-Alban (haughtily). Yes, Sir, I will keep my word with your father.

Pauline (dismayed). Ah! Great God!

Saint-

Saint-Alban (in the same tone). And however novel this mode of interceding, it will not turn against Mr. Melac.

Pauline (to Saint-Alban.) He'll kneel before you. —He don't know . . . *(to Melac)* Cruel enemy to yourself! Learn that he has pledged himself to silence; that he alone can preserve for you the situation . . .

Melac, Jun. I reject it.

Pauline. Foolish man!

Melac, Jun. What service, Pauline? I should strip my father of his situation! would pay for it by your loss, and should be indebted for it to my enemy.

Saint-Alban (with dignity). Sir . . .

Pauline (to Melac). What's then the meaning of such passion?

Melac, Jun. If he spares my father, he marries you, and is too much rewarded;—but to attack my sentiments for you! . . .

Pauline (exasperated). Your sentiments! . . . What rights do you dare to assume! . . . have you not returned me my word?

Melac, Jun. Could honour allow me to keep it. You deprive yourself of your all to save my father . . .

Saint-Alban. What! those twelve thousand pounds, that are said to have been borrowed? . . .

Melac, Jun. Are her own; 'tis her fortune; all she possesses.

Saint-Alban. Are hers! *(aside)* Heaven! What virtue! *(deeply thoughtful).*

Melac, Jun. (with resolution). Have I then demanded too much from both of you, when I sacrificed myself, that the one would forbear insulting the

the unfortunate he oppresses, that the other would honour my loss with a tear, with a pang! he would have married you just the same, and I should have died in silence.

Pauline (to Melac, with passion). Ah! How could you come thus? . . . (*tears prevent her speaking,—throws herself on a seat, and says to herself*) unseasonable weakness.

Melac, Jun. (with spirit). Do not rob me of your tears, Pauline; they are the only thing I value in this world.

Pauline (greatly agitated, rising). Yes, I weep: But . . . 'Tis out of spite that I cannot help it.

Melac, Jun. Every thing is then lost for me!

Pauline. Your violence has destroyed every thing.

Enter AURELLY.

Aurelly (running). There's a quarrel here! . . . Melac?

Saint-Alban (after a short silence). No, Sir, every thing is agreed on. You assured me that your daughter was absolutely at liberty to chuse for herself: that choice is made (*to Pauline*). No; I will not establish my happiness upon such painful sacrifices; there can be no happiness for me, purchased at the expence of yours.

Melac, Jun. (penetrated). What do I hear? . . . Ah! Sir!

Saint-Alban. Let us be reconciled, my fortunate rival. I could marry an adorable woman, whose ho-

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nour

nour and generosity would have sufficiently secured my felicity ; but her heart belongs to you.

Melac, Jun. How guilty I am !

Saint-Alban. A lover only : and the most ardent are those who offend the less. I was myself unjust.

Aurelly (to Pauline). Thou didst love him then ?

Pauline (kissing the hand of her father). This day has thrown a light on all my sentiments.

Aurelly. My children, you are sure of me. But shall we avail ourselves of the service we render to his father, to extort from him a consent that his pride will perhaps disown ?

Pauline. Ah ! what a sorrowful light ! how could I blind myself to such excess ?

Melac, Jun. Pauline, you know if he loves you !

Saint-Alban (to Melac). Desire him to come here ; —do not arm his soul, by anticipation, against the blows he is going to receive. Tell him nothing.

Melac, Jun. Sir, my life is in your hands.

Aurelly. You are losing time. [*Exit Melac.*]

Aurelly (to Saint-Alban). While we are waiting for him, let me discharge my word with you, Sir. Here is an order for Mr. Prefort, my correspondent in London, to pay you, on your arrival there, twenty thousand pounds.

Saint-Alban. Mr. Prefort, do you say ?

Aurelly. In good paper—look.

Saint-Alban. However good these bills may be, you know that's not ready money.

Aurelly. Paper that may be discounted at a moment's notice.

Saint-

Saint-Alban. For these last six days, the person you direct me to has not discounted a bill.

Aurelly. Who says so? I received from him, this morning, five and twenty thousand pounds, which have been discounted this week.

Saint-Alban. From Prefort?

Aurelly. I have no other resource for my payments.

Saint-Alban. By the post of this day I am informed of his death.

Aurelly. What a story!

Saint-Alban. They ought not to deceive me? . . . But have you not received your letters? . . .

Aurelly. I am expecting them (*He rings*).

Enter ANDRÉ.

Aurelly (to André). Call Dabins, and desire him to come here as soon as possible; (*to Saint-Alban*) he is my confidential man, and my cashier, he'll set us right. [*Exit André.*

Enter DABINS.

Aurelly (to Dabins). Ah! . . . my letters!

Dabins (gives him a large parcel of letters). Here they are . . . I was just coming . . .

Aurelly. Answer this gentleman.

Saint-Alban. These bills . . .

Aurelly. Yes . . . (*to Dabins*). Didn't you receive, this morning, five and twenty thousand pounds—the discount of bills of the same kind?

Dabins (hesitating, to Aurelly). Sir . . .

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Aurelly.

Aurelly (in a passion). Have you received them, or not?

Saint-Alban. You must answer.

Aurelly. Where is the mystery then? He has been like a madman the whole day. Have you received them?

Dabins (embarrassed, to Aurelly). Sir . . . My cash can be produced; the bank is full.

Aurelly (to Saint-Alban). I was certain of it. I do therefore add to the sums I remit you for Mr. Melac . . .

Dabins (surprised). You discharge Mr. Melac's debt?

Aurelly. What is he going to say?

Dabins. What an error I have been in!

Aurelly. Speak out.

Saint-Alban. I see clearly that no cash came from London.

Aurelly (to Dabins). My checks have not been cashed?

Dabins (quickly). No, Sir, it cou'dn't be;—that's the news I received this morning.

Aurelly (enraged). With what do you pay then?

Dabins (a moment without speaking, suffocated with joy). With twenty-five thousand pounds Mr. Melac lent to me.

Aurelly. Just Heaven!

Pauline. Father!

Saint-Alban. Ah! What a man!

Dabins. Twenty thousand pounds from his receipt—five thousand of his own. I cannot hold my tongue any longer.

Pauline.

Pauline. How proud I am of it! My heart anticipated his merit.

Enter MELAC, SEN.

Pauline (perceiving Melac, Sen., precipitates herself at his feet). Oh, the most generous! . . .

Melac, Sen. What are you doing, Pauline? (*Aurelly offers likewise to throw himself at his feet,—he prevents him.*) My dear friends!

Melac, Jun. At the feet of my father!

Melac, Sen. Dabins, you have betrayed me!

Dabins (with joy). Could I keep your secret, when I was told this gentleman was discharging your debt?

Melac, Sen. He comes to my assistance?—(*Aside.*) Oh, Virtue! there's thy reward.—(*To Aurelly.*) But, friend, what are then thy resources?

Saint-Alban. The whole fortune of this lady deposited in his hands.

Melac, Sen. Of our Pauline? . . . Ah, my dear Aurelly!

Aurelly. You were sacrificing yourself for me!

Melac, Sen. But, you . . .

Aurelly. Can you compare money when your honour and situation were at stake?

Melac, Sen. I was discharging a debt towards my unfortunate benefactor; but could you, when you suspected my probity, owe any thing to your guilty friend?

Melac, Jun. (with joy). Ah, father!

Saint-

Saint-Alban. Well! Mr. Aurelly... Can I accept for payment the check you offer me?

Melac, Sen. (with fear). What check?

Aurelly (penetrated, to Saint-Alban). You shall be satisfied, Sir. My first sentiment was due to him, most certainly; the second brings me back entirely to my misfortune.

Melac, Sen. That's the very thing I apprehended!

Aurelly. I had nothing to offer you, for my friend, but bills that are not approved of; I'll have my check back again. Your money is in my bank still; and God forbid I should make use of it.—*Dabins*, take it back to Mr. Melac, and I... I shall submit to my fate.

Melac, Sen. Stop; I will not receive it.

Aurelly. What's the meaning of that, Melac?

Melac, Sen. Wretched *Dabins*!

Aurelly. Do you believe me vile enough...?

Melac, Sen. Mr. Saint-Alban! 'twould be abominable for you to take advantage of a secret which is due only to our confidence... No; I declare the money shall not be returned.

Aurelly. Do you mean to give me more pain than you would have spared me?

Melac, Jun. (warmly). Mr. Aurelly, do not persist...

Pauline. Mr. Saint-Alban!

Melac, Jun. (to Saint-Alban). You admire virtue.

Melac, Sen. Will you suffer her most valuable patron to sink?

Aurelly (with enthusiasm). What are you doing, my friends?—To prevent my being unhappy, you become

become every one culpable. Can you forget that an excess of generosity has just led astray the most deserving man? Thus, if he was wrong to dispose of that money, what excuse could I have for retaining it?

Melac, Sen. The consent we ask of him.

Aurelly. Let him be suspected.—Friendship made you guilty of the attempt; but I cannot accept of such a service without being criminal.—(To *Saint-Alban*.) You are more collected, Sir; be our judge.

Saint-Alban. Collected!—Ah, gentlemen! Oh, most respectable family! Do you believe I have such an unfeeling soul, that you besiege it with such violence? You wish my opinion? . . .

Melac, Jun. And we pledge ourselves to submit to it.

Saint-Alban. 'Tis the same that is written in the heart of every honest man; permit me only to add a word . . . Aurelly, give me a proof of your esteem, by accepting me for your only creditor.

Aurelly. You, Sir?

Saint-Alban. I insist upon it.—As to you, Mr. Melac, keep your situation, and honour it long. Unite your son to that young lady, who rendered herself so deserving of him, by sacrificing her whole fortune for you.

Melac, Sen. That's my most earnest wish. My son adores her; and, if my friend has no objection to it . . .

Aurelly (confused). Do you know who she is?

Melac, Sen. (with effusion). I ought to have guessed it. The heart of a father betrays itself a thousand times

times in a day. She is thy daughter, thy most generous daughter, and I demand her for my son.

Aurelly. You demand her!—Ah, my friend! *(They throw themselves into each other's arms.)*

Melac, Jun. (to Pauline). My father gives his consent to our union!

Pauline. That's the most invaluable of his benefactions.

Saint-Alban. Aurelly, return me the check: I set off; make yourself easy. Its amount will be soon settled; at any rate, I shall supply every thing.

Aurelly. With your own fortune?

Saint-Alban. I wish it may be always as well disposed of!—You taught me how to enjoy such sacrifices. 'Twould be in vain for me to admire you, if your example don't raise me to the honour of imitation . . . At my return, we shall balance accounts. *(Every one express their admiration.)*

Aurelly (in raptures). Sir, I feel myself worthy to accept that service; for, had I been in your place, I would have done as much. Accelerate then your return, that you may witness the marriage of this young couple you overwhelm with benefactions.

Melac, Sen. Why should we defer their happiness? Let us unite them this very evening. Ah! what a pleasure, my friends, to recollect that a day so replete with sorrows should not be lost to virtue!

THE END.

